

Independent thinking – Why is it worth discussing this topic?

Jean Piaget's research on the theory of cognitive stages of development shows how significant the changes in thinking skills that take place at the age of 11 are. This is the start of the period in which young people become able to make judgements for themselves and draw their own conclusions. They also have the ability to look for the general truth behind the facts, to reflect on their own thoughts, to systematise them and to come up with more and more general theories. At this age, fresh thinking and creativity give young people the courage not only to solve theoretical philosophical and social problems, but also to put their own views into practice. This is the period in which you can help young people develop critical thinking skills. The aim of education is to prepare students for a conscious and responsible life in the adult world, therefore the development of critical thinking skills should be one of the main tasks of education today. It is particularly necessary today in the age of the Internet, which bombards us with unfiltered information and draws us into the cyberworld. Critical thinking is one of the most important skills of the 21st century, as it protects us against the flood of unproven information and manipulation.

Thanks to critical thinking, people are able to independently select the information they receive and make their own judgements. Distinguishing between facts and opinions will not only help one form one's own opinion, but also defend it and resist manipulation. Understanding the intentions behind the source of the information will make it possible to think about the consequences, to question opinions taken for granted, to make one's own assumptions, to form independent judgements based on solid foundations.

These skills are a vaccine for digital inhabitants against accepting what they find on the Internet as received truth, against being deceived by people who are pretending to be someone else, helping them retain their own rational thinking and sober judgement of the situation.



| DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS!

In today's class, we talked about the subject: *Independence in thought and freedom*

Proposals for activities:

- Have you or someone you know ever fallen victim of manipulation? Tell the story to your child. Draw their attention to the moment when caution was lacking.
- Organise an investigation task you can perform together: tracing manipulation, fake news and lies. Each of you can find examples of manipulation and think together about who the victim might be. You can find a lot of examples of fake news on the internet.
- Find an issue on which you have a different opinion than your child, e.g. the right to decide about your own appearance – outfit, hairstyle, makeup. Listen to each other without judging and find at least two aspects in which you agree with each other. This exercise helps to open oneself up to a different way of thinking without giving up one's own opinion.
- Parents are role models for their children, even if teenagers deny it. They look up to us and maybe not immediately, but after some time they imitate the customs they have learned at home. Therefore, modelling is a key educational tool. Try, together with the whole family, to put away your phones and plan an interesting way to spend time together – this will increase the chances of an effective digital detox. Agree with your child on the rules for using the mobile phone that apply to all members of your family. Diving into the digital world cuts people off from real life and social relations. Try to create situations at home in which you pay attention to one another and do not escape to the digital world. Nothing can replace a child's personal contact with another person.