

# THE CONCEPT OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## LESSON 2: RIGHTS AND THE LAW

### Lesson aim:

- To highlight where rights come from and their basis.
- To outline to students the role of the law and why it is necessary.

### Learning objectives:

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- outline different types of rights and identify where the rights are established;
- explain why it is necessary to have laws;
- outline briefly how the system of law works and is complied with; and
- discuss and debate issues of right and wrong in relation to the law.

### Lesson outline:

#### In-class activity: Opening discussion

Explain to students that some rights originate simply from being human and others from the laws of the state. The resource provides some brief detail on the origin of rights. Read through it with students and, using the information on different rights from the previous lesson, ask them:

- How are these rights established? Where do they come from?
- How should they be enforced?
- How do people find out about their rights?
- What do people do if they don't get their rights?

(NOTE: The main aim of this discussion is to identify that some rights come from the law and leads into the following session on the reason for the law.)

#### In-class activity: Discussion on the law

- Ask students to think about school, the classroom and the rules that apply. What makes students take part in school life? Why do students attend school, is it compulsory or voluntary? What keeps them in school? How does the classroom situation work, i.e. teachers provide information and guide learning, students listen, learn and participate in lessons, activities and exams? Why does this situation work? When does it not work?
- Now ask students to imagine there were no rules regarding school or in the classroom and everyone could do what they wished. Ask them to describe what might happen in this situation? Would everyone attend school? What would the situation be like in the classroom? How would teachers, students and parents react? How would they feel? What would they do in this situation?
- Divide students into groups, in which they are going to draw up a list of rules for the classroom that respect students' rights. When each group has compiled a list of rights, the class will need to decide on what rules make it into the master set of class rules. This should be done by way of a vote.
- Next ask students to identify the type of responsibilities that might go with those rights.

#### In-class activity: Rules discussions

Following on from the previous lesson, explain that the class will participate in more detailed discussions on rules, their impact and the place of the law. Divide the class into groups and ask them to consider:

- Rules they should obey a)in school b)in the workplace c)in society.
- List one rule in each area stating
  - a) what the rule is;
  - b) why it is there; and
  - c) what the penalty is for breaching that rule.
- Bring the class back together and ask each group to present their findings to the class. All rules should be put on a flipchart or blackboard so that each student can see them.

## LESSON 2: RIGHTS AND THE LAW (CONTINUED)

➤ Continue discussions with students on such rules as listed. They can be prompted with the following to facilitate discussions:

- Does everyone keep these rules?
- Why or why not do you think this is?
- How are rules kept from being broken? (Teachers can play devil's advocate at this point and suggest fear and punishment are the only deterrents to stimulate more debate. Look for other suggestions such as active participation, community spirit, discussions etc.)

### Student assignment: Identifying potential problems

Teachers should provide students with **Worksheet 1c**, which contains an example about rules and complying with them. Ask students to take the worksheet home, read through it and answer the questions at the end of the sheet.

When completed, teachers should discuss their answers in class to clear up anything that the students didn't understand.

(NOTE: Look for some of the following strategies in student's answers: a) negotiate solution with students b) remove computers completely c) install vandal proof security d) install additional supervision.)

### Optional group activity: How do you decide?

In groups ask students to consider a situation where they are going on holiday with a group of their friends. There is a range of situations that they have to consider and decide what they would do:

- Two want to go to Spain, the others to Greece.
- Three want to rent a large apartment in the town, the others want to rent a house by the beach.
- Two are smokers, the others are not and don't want smoking in the apartment.

➤ Four want to have parties every night, two don't mind the occasional party but not every night.

➤ One broke another's music speakers and won't pay to fix or replace them.

➤ Property has been damaged in the accommodation but no-one admits liability.

Each group should identify:

- the issues;
- potential problems;
- conflict of rights;
- proposed solutions; and
- what rules would they wish to have and how would they be agreed.

After completing the exercise, try to categorise the rules they have developed, such as do they protect rights? Are the rules fair?

### In-class activity: End of lesson discussions

Ask students what makes the law work? What would happen if there were no laws in Ireland? What if the rule of law broke down, there were no gardai, no legal entitlements, no courts and no punishments? How do you think people would act? Would people be more inclined to break the law? What would life be like?

### Student activity: Essay

Ask students to write an essay on the topic of rights and the rule of law. A topic of their own can be chosen or one of the suggestions below:

- "The rule of law inhibits the freedom of human beings."
- "According to some philosophers, human beings are inherently bad and need the heavy hand of the law." Discuss.
- "The law reflects how the people wish to behave." Discuss and evaluate this statement.