

THE BELIEF WALK



Introduction

This is not a full lesson but a task (25–40 mins) which can seamlessly fit into a KS4 Citizenship lesson. It explores a number of key concepts such as protected characteristics, identity and how law develops to reflect social change – the task uses veganism as an example throughout. Ethical veganism attracts protection under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and is also protected as a philosophical belief under the Equality Act 2010.

In this task, students take part in a structured outdoor philosophy walk, moving between a series of prompt stations placed around the school grounds. At each station, pairs or small groups discuss a question, building their thinking incrementally before returning to the classroom to consolidate their ideas in writing.

Why a walking discussion activity?

Research by Oppizzo & Schwartz (2014) found that walking consistently and significantly increases divergent (creative, open-ended) thinking compared to sitting – with creative output rising by an average of 60%. Crucially, the boost is caused by the act of walking itself, not the outdoor environment, and the effect persists after students return indoors. This makes a walking discussion ideal for exploratory, multi-perspective thinking, which is exactly what Citizenship exam questions require.

Relevant Links

NatWest worker told customer ‘vegans should be punched’ – [BBC article](#)

Casamitjana case – [BBC article](#)

Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion – [Article 9 of European Convention on Human Rights, page 7](#)

Protected characteristics – [Equality Act 2010](#)

LESSON OVERVIEW

Timing

25–40
minutes

(flexible according
to your needs)

Setting

school
grounds

(hall as an inside
option)

Citizenship curriculum links

National Curriculum (Citizenship) – Human rights and international law; diverse identities and mutual respect; legal system and protected beliefs.

AQA (Citizenship Studies 8100) – Rights and freedoms; identity and diversity; how law develops to protect citizens; trade unions and representation.

Pearson Edexcel (GCSE Citizenship Studies) – Respect and understanding; identity; rights and duties underpinning democracy; law and justice.

What you'll need

Station Posters; Student Recording Sheet.

Additional resources

Pens, blu-tac or clips and cones, laminator or plastic wallets for the Station Prompt Cards. Optional: clipboards (1 per group), printed route map if appropriate for your school grounds.

Before the lesson

- Print and laminate (or place in plastic wallets) the 5 Station Prompt Cards (one per station).
- Print Student Recording Sheet (1 per student).
- Identify 5 locations around the school grounds, spaced apart so groups do not crowd each other.
- Place one card at each station before students arrive outdoors (blu-tac to wall/bench or use clips and a cone).
- Optional: a planned route can work well with students moving in the same direction. Number the stations so students know the order of the route.

Learning Objectives

1. To explain how religion and beliefs are protected under the Equality Act 2010 and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
2. To consider how law develops over time to protect citizens' rights.

Note on framing

Students should be encouraged to explore this task through a citizenship lens, not as a debate about veganism itself.

THE TASK

Timings are a guide – adjust to suit your class.

Introduction [5 mins]

- Set the context by introducing the task.
- Explain the structure (5 stations, pairs move together to each station, read the context, discuss the question, referring to the key terms).
- Issue clipboards and recording sheets.

Suggested teacher script

- Today we're going to explore how one of our rights, specifically our freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9 of the European Convention of Human Rights "ECHR") – translates into real life.
- Ethical veganism attracts protection under the ECHR and it is also protected as a 'philosophical belief' under the Equality Act 2010. We're going to look at this in more detail by doing a structured walk – you'll visit five stations around the grounds, discuss one question at each, and make a brief note before you move on. There are no wrong answers at this stage: the point is to think carefully and hear different views. When you get back, you'll use what you've discussed to write a short individual response.

The Walk [15–25 minutes]

- Students move between stations in pairs or threes.
- Each station has some context, a discussion question and key terms.
- Students should spend 3–5 minutes at each station, discuss the question together, then make a brief note on their recording sheet before moving on.
- It is worthwhile listening in on discussions, asking probing questions, and noting any strong or interesting points you hear to feed back to the class later.

You can either...

- have all groups move simultaneously on a signal (a whistle or visible timer) or,
- allow groups to move at their own pace if your grounds allow for this without groups bunching up.

Suggested probing questions to use during the walk:

- What evidence are you basing that view on?
- Can you think of a counterargument to that position?
- Does it matter whether the employer knew about the belief?
- How is this similar to or different from religious discrimination cases?
- What would a fair outcome look like for both sides?

Consolidation (classroom) [5–10 minutes]

- Students return to the classroom and complete the written consolidation question on their recording sheet individually.
- This is the skills bridge – students draw on the discussion to write a structured response.

Suggested teacher script

- You've had a chance to discuss how ethical veganism can be protected by the ECHR and the Equality Act 2010 from a number of different angles. Now I want you to bring that thinking together. Use your notes from the stations to write your individual response to the consolidation question at the bottom of your sheet. This is your chance to show you can argue a position with evidence.
- Take 2–3 minutes to hear back from the class before they write. Ask a few students to share the most interesting or challenging point they discussed. This helps students who struggled to form a view during the walk.



- Talk through the suggested structure for their consolidation question as a class before beginning to write their response:

- Make a clear argument,
- Use evidence from the stations,
- Consider at least one counterargument,
- Reach a conclusion.

Consolidation question

'The legal protection ethical vegans have against discrimination is necessary and fair.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? Use evidence and reasoning.

Differentiation

Support – Pair with a more confident peer for the walk. The recording sheet includes sentence starters and key vocabulary is defined on the sheet too. Some verbal feedback after the walk before the individual writing task may help students to form their thoughts before writing.

Stretch – Consider 'leaders' who could manage the discussions at the stations by ensuring voices are heard equally and then feedback once back in the classroom.

