



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM
SCHOOL

CHARACTER SOUGHT: A SPOTLIGHT ON ENRICHMENT



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Rethinking education, helping tomorrow's citizens flourish

University of Birmingham School was founded in September 2015 with a deliberate vision to foreground Character Education. Through a unique nodal admissions' policy we draw pupils from across Birmingham and accordingly we are intentionally diverse and inclusive – a truly civic school.

Distinctive, in that we purposefully and explicitly prioritise the development of students' character and academic accomplishments in equal measure – so that they flourish as content, socially aware, skilled citizens equipped to find and take their places on the world stage.

Our partnership with the University of Birmingham gives our students and our teachers unrivalled access to their world-class resources, research and people. This partnership makes us the UK's first secondary University Training School and gives us endless opportunities to collaborate, learn and grow.

Our diverse curriculum is supported by a school-wide enrichment programme and extended school day that ensures all students have the opportunity to explore their passions and develop as well-rounded citizens with great character. By balancing character development with academic success, we're creating better citizens, better communities, and a better world. Rethinking education, helping tomorrow's citizens flourish.

Colin Townsend
Principal



People grow through experience if they meet life honestly and generously. This is how character is built.

- Eleanor Roosevelt

Foreword



The aim of our studies is not to know what virtue is, but to become good’ - Aristotle

Enrichment is a critical part of our whole-school Character sought programme, one which all staff take part in and co-construct together.

Regularly asking the question ‘who do we want our children to become?’ and taking time to think deeply about this enables us to focus on creating a programme that provides intentional, planned and organised opportunity for our pupils to practise what they need in order to live flourishing lives as sons, daughters, mothers and fathers, employers and employees, neighbours and citizens.

We also think about the experiences that have shaped us that we would want our own children to experience – things that bring us awe and wonder, peace and fulfilment, hope and optimism – and make sure our pupils develop a rich social and cultural capital as they journey through school.

Finally, by acknowledging our role as moral exemplars we can reflect on how we can use opportunities within enrichment and beyond the classroom to build trusted and meaningful relationships with pupils that help foster a deeper sense of community and belonging.

This publication is meant as a practical guide for schools wishing to further develop their own sought character curriculum. For schools who are at the beginning of their Character Education journey there is guidance on using opportunities that likely already exist in schools in a more intentional way; for those who are contemplating dedicating more time for enrichment we share our whole school enrichment plans and some individual projects. There is also guidance on how to integrate social action into school culture, how to run Challenge Week and how we run the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme for the whole of year 9.

Please contact us if you would like to come and find out more about Character Education by Design.

Bec Tighe
Director of Character



Character by design

The habits that children learn and practise when they are growing up follow them through into adulthood; imagine how the world would be if children developed habits of courage, compassion, integrity, gratitude, curiosity and resilience? We believe that just as a school can be a place to teach a child to read and write, so a school can also be a place where a child learns to develop these virtues that enable them to live good lives, and flourish.

More specifically we believe that these character virtues are educable and can be “caught” from interactions in our community, “taught” through educational experiences and reflection, and “sought” out by people who come to pursue and direct their own character development.

Pupils are taught a virtue vocabulary so they have a language to talk about moral development; they have opportunity to develop virtue knowledge and discuss where they see virtue – and vice – present in their lives, and finally they have opportunity to reflect on their own character and consider what they need to focus on.

Character at University of Birmingham School isn't something which happens by accident; each aspect of school life is carefully thought about to see where we can provide opportunity to make Character Education explicit.

For example, our Home-School agreement focuses on the language of virtue and parents and carers are made aware of the importance we place on Character from the first time we meet; our rewards' system acknowledges and celebrates pupils who show good character; assemblies and morning line ups share stories of virtue, and lessons help signpost pupils and students to use specific virtues to maximise learning. Our 'Learning for Life' programme delivers PSHE, CEIAG and RSE through a character lens, using moral dilemmas, stories and the opportunity for virtue reflection.

Prefects have to show good character, and the first question staff are asked in recruitment is why character education is important to them.

By narrating our intent, deliberately finding opportunity for character taught, caught and sought and by making the implicit, explicit, in as many ways as possible, we hope to create an environment where everyone in our community can flourish.



The ultimate aim of character education is not only to make individuals better persons but create the social and institutional conditions within which all human beings can flourish.



Character Caught and Sought

Virtue is practical, so there is little point in knowing what is theoretically virtuous if it is not practised. Practising virtue requires practical wisdom (phronesis) so a school that commits to cultivating character must offer spaces where virtue is practised, errors are made, mistakes reflected upon and better decisions made moving forward. Enrichment is an integral part of our curriculum, and a core part of our school week. Guided by teachers, volunteers, mentors and members of the local community, our pupils and students are provided with a safe space to their find passions and interests, engage in social action and volunteering and develop a sense of belonging, agency and purpose. No opportunity is lost to make virtue learning transparent and explicit, and pupils and students are expected to reflect on their own personal journeys of growth at key points in the year.

Character caught

By seeing their peers practising courage, compassion and curiosity for example, and seeing the same virtuous modelled by the adults leading sessions, our pupils and student 'catch' character.

It is important therefore that all staff recognise their role as moral exemplars, and that we share explicitly during staff training what this might look like in reality. In everyday school life, but particularly during enrichment where pupils and staff may find themselves in less familiar territory, we ask staff to model the virtues we want our pupils to catch.

Walk around School on a Friday afternoon and you will see a member of staff showing patience as they help pupils pick up a whole lessons' worth of dropped stitches in knitting; another showing curiosity as they work with pupils to create a heat pump, another showing resilience as they embark on a couch

to 5k running programme with the pupils. It's also a place where staff can share their passion beyond their subject – for drama, kick boxing or gardening – and model to pupils what it looks like to continue to be a life-long learner.

Character Sought

Ultimately, the aim of character education is that pupils will begin to reflect on their virtue strengths and weaknesses and find opportunity to positively 'seek out' and develop the virtuous behaviours they need to truly flourish. In older pupils this might be to focus on developing civic virtue by taking part in social action or volunteering in school, or practising courage by auditioning for the school play. In younger pupils or those who are still habituating virtues, opportunities may need to be more guided by the teacher. At University of Birmingham School we try to find as many opportunities as we can, being mindful always of making things manageable for staff, for a 'character sought' curriculum.

What perhaps differs to how this would look in other schools, many of whom have their own outstanding extra-curricular offers, is the deliberate focus placed on these activities as spaces and places to practise virtue.

School opens from 08.00 for sporting and music clubs and classes, Friday afternoon is enrichment for everyone, time is found to provide space for Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh expeditions as well as international trips organised by School or funded through the Turing Scheme. Pupils have opportunities to volunteer to be trained to deliver aspects of PSHE, to work with researchers from the University of Birmingham, to be reading buddies or peer mentors or Prefects. The list is almost endless!

The Enrichment Programme

When UOBS opened in 2015 as a school for Birmingham with Character Education and flourishing at the heart of its vision, enrichment was built in to the extended school week to ensure all pupils and all staff could take part. There is still a rich 'extra curricular' diet of activities before and after school which also provide valuable opportunities for Character caught and sought, but our commitment to providing ambitious and inclusive opportunities sit firmly within the timetabled school day.

Various models have been trialled over the years but we believe we have hit the right balance by providing a two hour session on a Friday afternoon. This provides enough time to visit a Gudwara, bake cakes or play a game of chess and is the perfect way to finish a week.

The programme consists of a mix of compulsory projects and electives. Pupils in Key Stage 3 rotate around a series of projects that enable them to practise a range of character virtues. Not all of these activities are easy, and many put pupils far beyond their comfort zone, but it is in this space of safe challenge that character is truly created. Pupils from year 10 upwards have more free choice and select every half term from a list of over 40 different opportunities.

Whilst there may be some guidance and nudging from staff for older pupils to opt in to specific activities, they really do have free choice. By narrating the importance of 'character

sought' in assemblies and briefings, and through one to one conversations, it is hoped that pupils will begin to take ownership of their developmental journeys and take steps to choose things that will be of benefit, rather than defaulting to a series of electives that keep them within their comfort zone.

The Friday afternoon slot is also a place where pupils can opt into longer projects that can last anything from a term to a whole year. Students can study an additional language which they can take at GCSE, they can sign up to take part in the school play, play in the school orchestra or involve themselves in more intense research projects funded by the Royal Society where teachers work in collaboration with academics from the University of Birmingham. There is also the opportunity to volunteer in the local community and several pupils have found their own placements in local care homes or charity shops.

Planning a programme that is challenging, ambitious, inclusive and inspiring is time consuming and is managed by a designated Enrichment Officer. They ensure activities are safe and risk-assessed, they liaise with external stakeholders, create registers for activities as well as a myriad of other activities. There is also a commitment from Governors and School that activities are available to everyone and no one is excluded because of finance. Materials, transport and activities themselves are all free for all pupils, the majority of which are paid for through careful budgeting, with some additional funding from grants and donations.



Belonging to and actively participating in a school community is a deeply formative experience.

- Jubilee Centre Framework for Character, 2022

Project based enrichment

The projects may change year on year depending on staffing and links with partners but the themes tend to stay the same. Staff either opt in to support projects that are being run by external partners (which currently include local businesses, charities, members of the community, undergraduates and our own Sixth formers) or develop a project of their own. Electives on the other hand vary from term to term depending on what staff – and students – want to offer. Staff spend half the year running projects, and then swap with the staff who have been running electives. This enables a fair split between year groups, and between projects and electives.

Year 7 programme – A sense of place

As a school that draws pupils from across the City with a unique nodal admissions policy it's really important to guide pupils in year 7 to develop a sense of place – to nurture a sense of belonging to the school, to a local community which will be new to the majority of pupils, and to the City they all share.

'My Story' is a project delivered by an arts' organisation that encourages pupils to tell stories that are important to them through a series of drama workshops. 'My environment' has a conservation theme, where pupils may create bug boxes, grow seeds, litter pick in the park and sometimes just take walks in local green spaces to learn to connect with nature in an urban setting. 'My neighbourhood' is loosely based on the board game 'Monopoly' where pupils think about the spaces in the City that are poignant to them, share stories about them and then create their own bespoke board games. 'Thank you Café' is the ultimate celebration of community, with pupils creating dishes from different cuisines then inviting their families in to come and share food they have cooked together.

Throughout all these projects, pupils are encouraged to explicitly reflect on the virtues they are practising. Through understanding each other's stories they develop empathy and compassion; through understanding the value of green spaces they develop a sense of stewardship for their environment; performing in drama for many requires confidence and resilience, and finding out more about their University through trips and research requires curiosity. Staff notice pupils developing virtues and narrate this back, perhaps rewarding them with a 'green stamp' reward for character or nominated them for a character award in assembly.

Year 8 programme – A sense of self

In year 8 the focus becomes honed in on individual development of character. 'Physically' me provides a range of sporting opportunities to offer challenge not always found in the traditional PE curriculum – parkour, yoga, military fitness for example – whilst 'Spiritually me' enables pupils to consider how others find spiritually by visiting places of worship in the City. In 'Future me' pupils work with one of our corporate partners to imagine themselves as engineers, designers and architects of the future building miniature towns that are then donated to the local nursery school to play with. Pupils are taught how to amplify their voice when they think of topics they are passionate about and become social activists – creating campaigns to raise awareness or sometimes organising activities to raise money for good causes.



The enrichment activity 'spiritually me' allowed me to learn about other beliefs. This was an important moment as it was my first real time utilising empathy to see how life was experienced by others.

- Aarsalan

Year 9 programme - future thinking

Year 9 focuses on preparing for the future, with pupils beginning to consider the differences between eulogy virtues and CV virtues. Just as in CEIAG lessons, projects encourage pupils to think about what sort of things they enjoy, how different careers may give them a sense of purpose, whilst also providing opportunity for some more practical skills to put on their emerging CVs. They get to visit technical colleges, meet entrepreneurs and visit different Universities as well as completing some longer term goal setting tasks.

Projects continue to be delivered through a character lens with pupils continuing to develop empathy – for example in the ‘Community Champions’ project pupils work with a facilitating organisation ‘

Kissing it Better’ to learn conversational skills that enable them to have more meaningful interactions with older people. Pupils undertake a careers’ project working exploring digital skills and using some of the careers’ resources in ‘TechSheCan’ to make a stop motion animation of a topic they are passionate about. Pupils also undertake projects that help them prepare for the Duke of Edinburgh Award which they are all entered for.

Example of projects

	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b
Year 7	Thank you Cafe	My Community	My story	My University	My neighbourhood	My environment
Year 8	Spiritually Me	Future me	Grow a tenner	Community me	Physically me	Sustainably me
Year 9	Community Champions	Digital Design	First Aid skills	Careers	Careers	Duke of Edinburgh



Elective based Enrichment

When staff apply to work at University of Birmingham School the last question is always focused on what they could add to the enrichment programme. These can be activities that expand knowledge around curriculum areas normally not covered in day to day lessons or in an area completely unrelated to the curriculum. As anyone who has bumped into a pupil whilst out shopping knows, young people are intrigued by the 'outside' life of teachers and support staff, and to find out that your Mathematics' teacher is also a marathon runner, or your Computer Science teacher is a black belt at karate is beyond exciting. To then have sessions offered that enables staff to share these passions allows pupils to see their adults in a different light as the mantle of the teacher or learning mentor slips to reveal a skilled baker, passionate philosopher or a Dungeon Master.

Staff can also decide to work with other organisations and co-construct activities with external partners such as St John's Ambulance, local businesses, or academics at the University. Older pupils can also ask to run electives themselves – politics and tea, debate club and coding club are all run exclusively by pupils with some light touch supervision – and many are recognising the potential for some added expertise sought through contacting societies at the Students' Guild.

Pupils can select a first and second choice but are not always successful as some electives are always oversubscribed, and sometimes are given something they perhaps wouldn't have chosen. On these occasions we encourage the vast majority of pupils to stick with what they've been given – to try something they normally wouldn't try, to remain optimistic about the experiences they can have and develop resilience.

Inevitably, some pupils stay in their comfort zone, using the time to strengthen relationships, decompress before the weekend and safely enjoying learning new skills, but there are many whose lives have been transformed by making brave choices. The tech- entrepreneur who finally found their confidence presenting the school radio station, the robotic engineer whose curiosity and creativity were peaked during a coding enrichment and the art teacher who realised her vocation after running a sports club for year 7 – are all unanimous in citing the importance of what they learnt in enrichment in shaping where they are – and who they are –now.



Sample list of electives, Autumn Term

Art	Debate Club	Upcycling and textiles
Band Factory	EPCL	Martial Arts
Basketball	Faith and Belief Group	Mathematics Challenge
Chess	Friendship Bracelets	Mystery History
Craft	GCSE German	Netball
Book Club	Health Careers	Bootcamp Fitness
Indoor cricket	Heat Pump Research	Rugby
Crochet	Knitting	School production
Feminism in Shakespeare	Social Science on Screen	Sports Sanctuary
Squash	Table Tennis	Yoga
Volunteering	Pupil Leadership	Skills for University
Couch to 5k	Journalism	Bio-engineering



“

Being able to take part in so many things that have stuck with me and have served as a spring for new interests, has been significant. I have made character education my own by adapting it to me, through experiences and extensive reflection throughout the years. I've been able to apply it in life not only in school but outside of school too, throughout my life choices and milestones.

- Cameron

Duke of Edinburgh

- a whole school approach

There is a genuine synergy between the aims of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and character sought at University of Birmingham School. The Award provides a multitude of opportunities through its different categories for pupils to develop empathy, resilience, confidence, curiosity and courage and at bronze level can also provide a little extrinsic motivation for pupils to explore new skills, hobbies and interests for a more extended period of time. For many of our pupils the experience of visiting the countryside with friends, camping outdoors and digitally detoxing for a couple of days can be life changing. For this reason, we make it a compulsory element of the Year 9 Enrichment programme for everyone.

Funding

The programme is so important to the School that it has committed to fully funding it for the full cohort of year 9, and providing all the equipment pupils need such as backpacks and walking boots that might otherwise prove a barrier to taking part.

Promoting the Award

Pupils are introduced to the Award Scheme at the start of year 9. The requirements for each of the four main sections are shared in detail with lists provided by DofE to show the vast range of activities that pupils can undertake. Parents and carers are then invited in for an information evening so they can support pupils on their journey, and have any questions answered.

Inclusivity

It is paramount that all pupils feel they can be successful, and that the scheme provides a personal challenge that is tailor-made to suit an individual's starting point. For example, expeditions have wheelchair friendly routes, or can be adapted for those with other SEMH or mobility needs and campsites chosen are accessible for all. The Award enables pupils from different and diverse starting points to find success and over the last five years many pupils with an EHCP or additional needs have successfully completed the award.

Staff training

Two members of staff have responsibility for leading the programme and have been trained as accredited assessors and expedition supervisors. Other staff are incredibly generous with their time and there are always enough volunteers willing to support trips to not have to use external facilitators.

Planning expeditions

Pupils are given dedicated planning time during form and during project enrichment to prepare for DofE. This involves basic first aid training, building up resilience with practise walks, learning how to cook using a camping stove and putting up a tent.



Impact

Despite the constraints of coming out of lockdown, pupils dedicated 1638 hours to volunteering through the DofE Award between April 2021 and March 2022. Over 50 pupils went on from the year 9 to start Silver DofE and 3 pupils have already completed Gold in Year 13. Every pupils' journey is unique, but a theme common to all is that it has shown them what they are capable of.



An experience that helped me to transform as a person was the bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Although the experience was challenging, it allowed me to contribute to the school community when I began to volunteer in the library at lunch time and after school. This led to my passion for reading and contributed to my love of literature which I went on to study at A level.

- Kaitlyn



Doing Bronze D of E has been the highlight of my school life and gave me the chance to move out of my comfort zone. Walking out in the fields in an unknown area with just a map and my friends, as well as camping outside, was something I really didn't want to do but I used determination, courage and self-discipline and was extremely proud of my achievements.

- Payel





Cultivating Civic virtue

Civic virtues are defined by the Jubilee Centre as ‘the qualities of character that enable citizens to play a positive participatory role in their communities’. Research shows that pupils who volunteer when they are younger are much more likely to continue these actions in later life. By taking part in volunteering, social action (people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities) and organising other practical activities that benefit their communities, research shows that pupils not only see the impact their action can have on improving the lives of others, but feel the ‘double benefit’ of improved self-efficacy, well-being and sense of purpose. Just as opportunity to develop moral and intellectual virtues are deliberately designed, so too are opportunities for pupils to develop habits of service. Staff are encouraged to think about where enrichments could flex slightly to give an extra dimension of service to the activity. For example, sewing enrichment upcycles old scraps of material and then uses them to make Christmas stockings for the local children’s hospice; more advance knitters make blankets for premature babies at the local hospital and the origami club will make paper flowers to turn into Easter cards for local residents.

The School still takes part in the more traditional aspects of fund raising and charity work raising money through bake sales and non-uniform days which are valuable experience in themselves, but pupils are encouraged to reflect on what they can give beyond the £1 that may (or increasingly, may not) sit in their pocket. What can be put in place to encourage them to think about what it means to be a good neighbour and to take an active and participatory role in their communities, and how can School instil habits to develop agency, self-confidence, gratitude, and compassion to move past ‘knowing’ to ‘doing’?

Through a series of projects guiding them through social action in Key stage 3 school to a wide variety of opportunity in Sixth form, pupils are able to recognise that they can make a difference, that their voice matters and can be amplified by their actions, and that they are a valuable and intrinsic part of many communities.

My Environment

IN year 7 pupils undertake a conservation focussed study of their neighbourhood. They undertake a flora and fauna survey, identifying key plants, animals and insects in the school and local parks and woods. Pupils find out more about the secret life of bees, and have a ‘pollination picnic’ which enables them to think about all the foods they eat which rely on pollinators. Depending on the time of the year they make bug houses, sow seeds, plant bulbs and learn to be stewards of the school grounds. They also take a crash course in ‘emergency first aid’ for bees, learning how to make sugar water and drip it onto a spoon. ‘I used to be the sort of boy that would pull leaves off trees and swat flies – now I can identify loads of types of bees and know how to help them if they are tired’ Year 7

My neighbourhood

Pupils undertake a series of volunteering activities in and around the local neighbourhood. This might involve an afternoon of litter picking or leaf sweeping, bag packing in the local supermarket or making Christmas cards to hand out to local residents. Pupils have also volunteered in a Community Centre cleaning out the pond and (with some external providers) helped clear a local canal.

Community Me

In year 8 pupils are given a range of social action projects they might be interested in such as climate change, homelessness, food waste – and are encouraged to become mini activists. IN small groups with shared aims (and sometimes as a whole class), they research the issue, look at what's already being done and come up with their own campaign to raise awareness. This can include writing to MPs, creating posters for classrooms or lessons for L4L, making friendship bracelets to sell to raise money for charity.

Grow a tenner

Each class is given a tenner and 5 weeks to 'grow it' for a charity of their choice. They can use it to plan an event, buy ingredients, buy materials to make craft items. The tenner is then given back to petty cash and any profit given to charity. Pupils have sold lollipops, painted plant pots filled with a flower bulb, and used money to buy car washing materials for a staff car wash. Pupils are also expected to market events by creating posters, powerpoints and talking in assembly.

Volunteering

All pupils have the opportunity in Sixth form to find their own volunteering positions, which currently include working in charity shops, an animal conservation centre, local care homes and schools. Once pupils have found a placement, health and safety checks are made and attendance is monitored.

Kissing it better

After an opportune meeting in a field of tulips, University of Birmingham School have become the first school to partner with KIB, a charity set up to promote intergenerational work.

To make the model work, pupils receive an hour long tutorial from KIB on line where they also meet older people and listen to their stories. In the last hour, pupils write letters, make cards and craft gifts to donate in gift bags to local care home residents.



To bring our ideas to life, we created supported volunteering projects; giving young people a framework to use their talents to light up the day for older people, through music, art, pampering, drama or cookery, or just having a lovely chat. We noticed that everyone benefits when the generations come together: the young feel valued; the old feel valuable when they get the chance to tell their stories and pass on their experience.

- Jill Frazer, Kissing it Better

Challenge Week

An integral part of the enrichment programme is Challenge Week – a week dedicated to focussing on virtue development and reflection for year 7 – 9. Character growth requires that we make the not so easy choices, take ourselves out of our comfort zone and experience resistance. There is no easy way to do this but by working together and learning to see that obstacles can be overcome, pupils begin to believe they can be more courageous or more determined and with guidance can transfer this virtue learning to other aspects of their life. It helps when there is a healthy dose of fun and excitement involved and generally anything with water or mud make things even better.

The week is underpinned by an ethos of ambitious inclusion and all pupils, regardless of their special need or circumstance, are able to feel included. Guided by pupil and parent voice this may mean slightly adapting or modifying activities, organising different transport or changing routes to make them, for example, more wheelchair friendly. Challenge week is for everyone, and we expect everyone – including staff – to take part in everything.

Planning

The programme is planned to offer a range of physical, mental and creative challenges, whilst also contributing to developing social and cultural capital and ensuring all of pupils have a rich diet of experience. Planning starts early in the academic year as activity centres and coaches get booked up very quickly. The majority of trips are organised centrally by the Enrichment Officer, who will complete bookings risk assessment and create work books, but a more blended model is being piloted so staff who have a particular interest or passion can design their own more bespoke days. Strategically placed in the first week of July so that there is more staffing flexibility and coach availability, it provides a space for the Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh expeditions and project write ups, and is also Work Experience week for year 10 and 12. This is the only part of Enrichment where we ask for a voluntary donation from families to help supplement the cost.

Reflections and rewards

Most days start and end either in the classroom or a communal space with pupils reflecting on the virtues they will need/ have used and how that has enabled them to develop their character. Teachers lead these sessions and help pupils recognise and draw out when they have used specific virtues or shown pronesis. There are often light bulb moments when pupils begin to recognise the range of strengths they do have, particularly around empathy, kindness and compassion, which are sometimes harder to see or practise in a regimented classroom environment.



Sample Project: Spiritually Me

Virtue focus: empathy, curiosity, spirituality

Outline of project

Pupils use this project to explore what spirituality in all of its many perspectives means to them, by looking at how others seek meaning in life – through their association with a place of worship, their personal relationship with God, or their connection to nature. They are encouraged to ask questions of others to understand and empathise more with the different paths others have found.

Resources: no resources are required other than transport to get of places of spiritual worship and a park or green outdoor space.

Cost: of travel only

Weekly activities

Session 1

Virtue vocabulary: definitions of spirituality
Pupils are asked to reflect on some quotes about spirituality. Is it something they have heard of before? Is it the same as faith? Do they feel they have a sense of connecting to something bigger than them? Would they like to? The aim of the enrichment is explained as learning to empathise with others and learn from people who have found their own spirituality, and pupils are asked to think about how they can show empathy and respect whilst in places of spirituality. Pupils learn about mindfulness and listen to a guided

mindfulness meditation for 5 minutes and discuss why people might use this to develop spirituality. The class discusses how people may use nature as a means of contemplating something bigger than them – and then walk to a green space, where they consciously observe and narrate their surroundings, sitting down in silence if possible. Homework: to ask family if they have an understanding of spirituality. Reflections: how have they felt about the session?

Sessions 2 -5

Various places are visited to learn from people of faith about their own spiritual journeys. These have included the Buddhist temple, Gurdwara, Mosque, Synagogue, and various local churches. All places were keen to show children around and spent considerable time talking about their own beliefs, and those of their faith or religion.

Ways of adapting the project for other schools

Lack of access to places of different faiths: since the Pandemic, many places of worship offer virtual tours. Synagogues360, 50buildings.telford has links to a church and Gurdwara for example.

No RS teacher: the project has been run successfully by non RS teachers, although they do bring a level of expertise that can enhance learning. Faithbeliefforum offers workshops for schools to engage with questions of faith, and can match different schools together.



Sample Project: Thank you Cafe

Outline of project

Pupils use cooking as a vehicle for exploring gratitude and thinking about all the things that family, friends and members of the community do for us that we should be grateful for. After each lesson they write a thank you note showing gratitude for something someone does for them, and attach that to the food they have created so they can gift it when they get home. They are set a series of homeworks that encourage random acts of kindness and appreciation, and on the last day they open the 'Thank You Café' in a classroom, inviting friends and family to come into school and eat a selection of things they have cooked. Bakes reflect the diversity of the school and include backlava, coconut burfi, fried dumplings, and scones, and are always vegetarian.

Resources:

Treasury tags (or cut up card), string or ribbon; ingredients for cooking; sandwich bags or silver foil or carrying food home. Where possible, crockery for opening the 'Thank You Café', tablecloths or handmade placemats; bunting.

Cost:

Minimal if pupils bring in their own ingredients. If School are providing ingredients then bakes can be adapted to be based around cheaper ingredients.

Weekly activities

Session 1:

Virtue vocabulary; definition of gratitude.

Pupils are asked to think about the last time they really showed gratitude to someone in their family. In pairs they think of different people who they could say 'thank you' to outside of school – from the bus driver to football coach to family and friends. Pupils write a short 'thank you' note and decorate it on a treasury tag ready for the end of the lesson. After a health and safety induction to the food room, pupils bake simple vanilla biscuits, place them individually in sandwich bags and attach the 'thank you' treasury tags'. Reflection: teacher asks pupils to reflect on who they could show gratitude to this lesson, and then chooses five people to share their reflections.

Homework: pupils are asked to say 'thank you for...' to five different people and notice the responses.



Session 2:

Virtue vocabulary: recap meaning of gratitude.

Lesson starts with pupils sharing who said they said 'thank you' and the responses of the other people. Explain how gratitude makes the person receiving thank feel good, but also makes the person showing gratitude feel good – and that gratitude is shown to be very effective for our positive wellbeing. Pupils write their treasury tags with messages of thanks again. Pupils cook their second bakes (to take home and share. Reflection: pupils are asked to say 'thank you for...' to five different people in the class and notice the responses.

Homework: pupils think of different random acts of kindness (RAK) they can share this week – from smiling more, to offering to carry a teacher's books, to cooking supper.

Session 3:

Virtue vocabulary: definition of kindness. Pupils reflect on performing their RAK and what the outcomes were. Did people notice? Does it matter? How did they feel? What other virtues would have helped them (courage/ determination etc). Pupils think about staff in school who show kindness to them. They start the lesson by making a 'thank you card' that recognises something kind that a member of staff as done for them, and then hand out the card and third bake to a member of staff.

Homework: random acts of kindness (RAK).

Session 4: Virtue vocabulary: recap definition of gratitude.

Pupils reflect on the reaction of giving their bake and card to a member of staff. Pupils start the lesson planning the 'thank you café' and writing invitations to friends and family. Groups choose a bake to make for week five, and give out homework tasks of making 'thank you' placemats and 'thank you' bunting. Final bake – decorating biscuits with 'thank you' which they will take home.

Homework: preparing decorations for 'thank you café'.

Reflections: what have pupils learnt so far about the impact of showing kindness and gratitude? Are they developing habits of gratitude?

Session 5: All hands on deck.

One group decorates a spare classroom or smaller area of the school hall. Four groups bake and decorate biscuits for guests. Friends and family turn up and pupils share bakes with them. Reflection: the teacher leads a conversation with friends and family – how have they felt when pupils have shown kindness and gratitude? What has the impact been for them? Pupils then make a pledge to show more gratitude to friends and family.



Sample Project:

Future Me - Building an eco-village

Overview

Pupils practise a range of virtues in this project where they plan and build a model of an eco-village. It enables them to learn about sustainability and environment, consider the needs of a diverse community and consider careers for the future. The project at University of Birmingham School is led by employees from Wilmott Dixon, a national construction company who have a strong corporate and social responsibility culture. Once the eco-villages have been made they are donated to local nurseries who use them to play with.

Resources

Classroom, paper and card, glue, scissors. Tasks and other resources are available as a zipped file.

Cost: minimal

Weekly activities

Session 1

Virtue focus: definitions of curiosity, empathy and respect
Pupils are introduced to an overview of the project and a design brief. They brainstorm the wide range of jobs and careers that would need to be involved from the design process to the final build. Wilmott Dixon introduce the concept of social value in business, and share their vision to 'transform lives, strengthen communities, and enhance the environment so our world is fit for future generations'. Pupils think about why social responsibility in business is important, and whether this might influence where they would work in the future. Pupils get themselves into teams and write some team rules based on the virtue focus on the lesson.

Homework: pupils think about how empathy may be important in different professions. Reflection: which virtues have helped them be successful in the task today?

Session 2

Virtue focus: critical thinking, curiosity, pronesis
Pupils are given an information pack with sustainability and design tasks. Pupils have to consider, for example, how they will generate renewable energy, weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of each source. They think about how to encourage wildlife, the impact that green spaces might have on building costs, how to balance building eco-homes with affordable housing etc. There are conflicting agendas in some of the tasks which require pupils to think critically, weigh up pros and cons of decisions they make and to begin to consider how to manage conflicting points of view. The teams use empathy and respect to begin to work together to map out their village.





Homework: pupils are asked to show curiosity and further research one aspect of the lesson in more detail. Reflection: pupils consider how they managed to avoid conflict and which virtues particularly helped this.

Session 3

Virtue focus: critical thinking, empathy, respect and how these can be used in group discussions. Three pupils are allocated the role of construction manager, quantity surveyor and sustainability manager. Each job has a set of very specific tasks and instructions that need to be done, but successful teamwork will only be achieved if pupils communicate well, share ideas, listen to each other's opinions and work together by showing respect, empathy and critical thinking. The remainder of the lesson is spent planning out the project. Homework: pupils are asked to think of one aspect of teamwork they have used in the session, and apply it to a something in the week ahead. Reflection: how does empathy help us to work together better?

Session 4

Virtue focus: courage, confidence, compassion
This session is used to complete the building of the eco village. The pupils also work together to prepare a pitch for employees of Willmott Dixon for the next lesson. This creates a fantastic opportunity for pupils to practice courage, confidence and

compassion as they decide which team members are going to present and who's going to take responsibility for each part of the presentation. Homework: practise their pitch. Reflection: how have they used determination in today's session?

Session 5

Virtue focus: confidence, determination
In this final session each team presents their design and answers questions about their village to a panel of Willmott Dixon employees (in our case this was done over Zoom). Pupils will need to justify their spending, design and sustainability decisions and are briefed about effective pitching and presenting skills beforehand.
All pupils receive the Industrial Cadets Bronze Award at the end of the course and the winning team receive an Amazon voucher.

Ways of Adapting the project

No links to corporate partners: the project can easily be run by a teacher with the resources available in the zip files. Whilst it may be difficult to find a single person to run the course, there may be local or national construction or engineering companies who could provide one off sessions in person or in zoom. Parents or carers involved in planning or design could be invited in to judge instead.



Extra-curricular Opportunities

A recent peer-led review of extra-curricular activities concluded that there was greater potential to make character learning more explicit. Whilst many activities provide opportunities for Character caught and are instrumental in developing virtues such as resilience, patience, creativity, curiosity, it is easy to neglect this time as a more deliberate opportunity for character formation. With this in mind, various changes have been made to the extra-curricular programme as an opportunity for Character taught and sought.

Sport

There has always been a rich diet of sporting opportunity at UOBS. After looking at how best to tie this in with a PE curriculum which is designed around character development, the team now offers two distinct types of extra-curricular clubs. Sports' Academy is for those who want to achieve excellence, who want to receive coaching, and develop expertise in their specialism, challenging themselves to see how far they can go. Sports Sanctuary is for those who want to use Sport to cultivate friendships, look after their physical and mental well-being, remain curious and try new sports. Whilst there is implicit reference to virtue learning during activities – a lexicon

regularly used by the PE and Sport staff at UOBS, there is now more deliberate reflection at the end of sessions on how particular virtues have enabled success (or helped to make failure positive) and at the conclusion of each term pupils are expected to take time to reflect on how aspects of their character has developed after engaging with the activity over a number of weeks.

Leadership opportunities

Providing opportunities for pupils to seek character through leadership opportunities is crucial, and so there are many opportunities built into school life. Pupils can be library leaders, peer mentors, transition leaders, reading buddies, sports' leaders, and curriculum reps. They lead Open Days, host at conferences and help to shape and deliver PSHE. Staff narrate these opportunities with a language that focuses on civic virtues; the importance of actively belonging to and shaping community, the value of service and volunteering. Specific changes have been made in light of a peer review of character which include asking prefects explicitly about how their character makes them suitable for the role, and how this opportunity will help to develop character.

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Turing Scheme

The Turing Scheme is set up to help pupils from all schools in the UK to explore different parts of the world. Schools bid for funding which fully pays for flights, accommodation and basic living expenses. The School has been successful in bidding for two awards; the first mobility in 2022 was called 'Aristotle in Arizona', the second, a larger and more ambitious mobility taking 20 staff and pupils is entitled 'Aristotle in America'. Both projects focus explicitly on character development. Pupils complete an application form which focuses on how the experience will help to develop their character, how they will engage in social action in America, and what they will bring back to the school community on their return. It is the ultimate example of character sought, and has changed the lives of those who have taken part.



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With thanks to the Jubilee Centre for
Character and Virtues for their
support of this project.

Thank you to colleagues
from UOB School, and to
Ellie Ellis-Bryant, for their
contribution to these resources.