



# **CHARACTER EDUCATION**

## **EVALUATION HANDBOOK**

### **FOR SCHOOLS**

Guidance, approaches and methods for  
the self-evaluation of taught and caught  
character education provision

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**UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM**



THE JUBILEE CENTRE  
FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES



# THE JUBILEE CENTRE FOR CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is a unique and leading centre for the examination of how character and virtues impact on individuals and society. The Centre was founded in 2012 by Professor James Arthur. Based at the University of Birmingham, it has a dedicated team of 30 academics from a range of disciplines: philosophy, psychology, education, theology and sociology.

With its focus on excellence, the Centre has a robust and rigorous research and evidence-based approach that is objective and non-political. It offers world class research on the importance of developing good character and virtues and the benefits they bring to individuals and society. In undertaking its own innovative research, the Centre also seeks to partner with leading academics from other universities around the world and to develop strong strategic partnerships.

A key conviction underlying the existence of the Centre is that the virtues that make up good character can be learnt and taught. We believe these have largely been neglected in schools and in the professions. It is also a key conviction that the more people exhibit good character and virtues, the healthier our society. As such, the Centre undertakes development projects seeking to promote the practical application of its research evidence.

## Acknowledgments

The development of this handbook has been a collaborative effort. The Centre has sought to bring in expertise from academics, teachers and other educationalists to ensure that the latest and best thinking about character education self-evaluation is captured. In particular we would like to thank:

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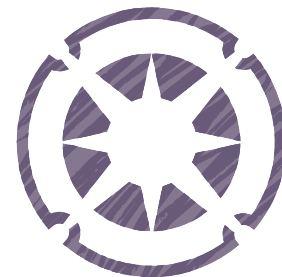
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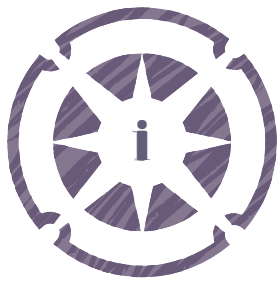
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# CONTENTS



|            |   |            |
|------------|---|------------|
| <b>i</b>   | <b>HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK</b>  | <b>2</b>   |
|            | <b>SECTION 1: PLANNING AN EVALUATION</b>  | <b>5</b>   |
| <b>1.1</b> | Background to schools' self-evaluation  | 7          |
| <b>1.2</b> | The nature of character and character education evaluations   | 11         |
| <b>1.3</b> | Evaluating character education: purpose and principles  | 15         |
| <b>1.4</b> | How to evaluate character and character education: limitations and opportunities                            | 19         |
| <b>1.5</b> | Virtue knowledge, reasoning and practice: three components for evaluation                                   | 23         |
| <b>1.6</b> | Useful further reading  | 25         |
|            | <b>SECTION 2: CHARACTER CAUGHT:<br/>SCHOOL ETHOS SELF-EVALUATION FRAMEWORK</b>                              | <b>27</b>  |
| <b>2.1</b> | How to use the primary and secondary self-evaluation framework  | 29         |
| <b>2.2</b> | Primary self-evaluation framework   | 32         |
| <b>2.3</b> | Secondary self-evaluation framework   | 46         |
| <b>2.4</b> | Questions to capture perceptions of school ethos  | 59         |
|            | <b>SECTION 3: CHARACTER TAUGHT:<br/>PERSPECTIVES ON EVALUATING<br/>CURRICULUM STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES</b> | <b>61</b>  |
| <b>3.1</b> | Planning an evaluation  | 63         |
| <b>3.2</b> | Surveys   | 69         |
| <b>3.3</b> | Moral dilemmas  | 83         |
| <b>3.4</b> | Observation   | 91         |
| <b>3.5</b> | Interviews  | 101        |
| <b>3.6</b> | Evaluating character education lessons  | 117        |
|            | <b>SECTION 4: STUDENT SELF-REFLECTION ON<br/>CHARACTER AND VIRTUE</b>                                       | <b>125</b> |
| <b>4.1</b> | Practical advice on student self-reflection   | 127        |
| <b>4.2</b> | Ideas and activities to encourage student self-reflection on character                                      | 131        |
| <b>4.3</b> | Resources for self-reflection   | 139        |



# HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK

This handbook provides a practical introduction to the evaluation of character education in primary and secondary schools. It:

- \* provides advice, guidance and tools to enable schools to implement the principles and practice of self-evaluation to enhance and improve their character education provision;
- \* is intended to be a source of inspiration that schools should adapt to their own context;
- \* is based on the premise that by using varied forms of self-evaluation teaching staff can develop a holistic and formative picture of their school's character education profile; and
- \* is designed to support the recent movement in schools to self-evaluate practice. School-led approaches to self-evaluation are now commonplace in most schools, including the Ofsted Framework, whereby inspectors often use the outcomes from self-evaluation as the starting point for their inspections.

**Section 1** offers an introduction to self-evaluation and outlines important principles, limitations and procedures. It also provides an overview of the nature of character and character education. It is important to read this section before planning an evaluation.

**Section 2** provides a framework for schools to evaluate their whole school character education provision. The primary and secondary frameworks should be used as a best-fit model and schools should adapt the frameworks to meet their needs.

**Section 3** looks at the different approaches and methods that could be used to self-evaluate formal or non-formal curriculum interventions, strategies and activities designed to develop character. There are sub-sections on the use of surveys and self-report scales, observations of lessons, group interviews and dilemmas. It starts with a more general overview on the nature and use of self-evaluation methods and instruments.

**Section 4** explains how students' self-reflection can support the development of character and more specifically practical wisdom. This section includes examples of different schools' approaches to student self-reflection on character.

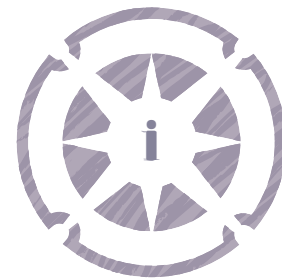
## Before planning your evaluation

Prior to making decisions about the evaluation strategies and resources to be adopted from this handbook, it is important for those undertaking the evaluation to:

- \* identify the focus of the evaluation – e.g. whole school approach (section 2); a one-off intervention (section 3); or students' self-reflection (section 4);
- \* agree the definition of character they wish to use, including the language and concepts that underpin their understanding (section 1);
- \* understand important principles in the evaluation of character education (section 1);
- \* acknowledge the limitations of evaluations in character education (sections 1 and 3.6);
- \* determine the time that can be committed and the expertise that can be drawn on for the evaluation (section 1 and perspectives on evaluating curriculum strategies and activities within section 3).

The answers to these questions will determine which evaluation strategies should be adopted from this handbook.





## Navigating the handbook

It is presumed that users of this handbook will not read the document cover-to-cover, but will instead pick and choose to read appropriate parts depending on the topics that are relevant to their evaluation. The following diagram offers some further points of navigation through the handbook.

Are you interested in...?



# CHARACTER EDUCATION EVALUATION – SOME TAKEAWAY LESSONS FROM THIS HANDBOOK

## Purposes of evaluation

- \* **Evaluating how a whole school's culture and ethos contributes to character education**  
Use the primary and secondary self-evaluation framework in section 2
- \* **Evaluating the effectiveness of a character education strategy, activity or approach**  
Use a method and/or tool detailed in section 3
- \* **Self-reflection on character by students**  
Use an approach and/or resource detailed in section 4

## Principles of evaluation (see pages 17-18)

- \* Undertake formative not summative evaluation
- \* Value and understand the importance of professional judgments
- \* Use mixed methods to triangulate evidence to get the fullest possible picture
- \* Use multiple voices in the evaluation
- \* Prioritise professional development
- \* Recognise and acknowledge the limitations of evaluating character

## Limitations of evaluation

Because of the complex nature of character, and the specific difficulties attached to observing virtue in practice, it is not feasible or desirable to aim for the aggregation of individual character and virtue profiles, as the results can become counter-productive, philosophically, psychologically and educationally.

**We encourage discretion and circumspection in any aspiration to measure virtue holistically.**