

## KS3 and KS4 Teacher Guide to The Character Curriculum

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has produced new curriculum resources for KS3 and KS4 pupils, to support secondary schools in the delivery of character education. All of the resources are available here: <https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/1844/character-education/> This project was made possible through the support of a grant from the Kern Family Foundation. This document outlines what character education is, why and how a curriculum has been developed as well as giving an overview of the materials being offered.

### Content of the curriculum

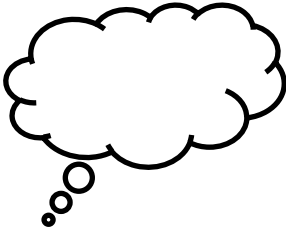
There is an introductory module, aimed at KS3, on the philosophy of virtue ethics, which gives students the vocabulary of virtue and an understanding of the process of virtue development. This module explains the philosophical underpinning of the curriculum's approach to character education. Subsequent lessons, which focus on topics, fall under four broad headings: flourishing individuals, flourishing relationships, digital flourishing and flourishing societies. Examples of the topics that appear under each heading are shown below. Many of the topics, including healthy relationships and online safety, are introduced in KS3 and re-visited in KS4. Within each topic, for example friendship, students have the opportunity to use a range of tools to reflect on their character. These include: moral dilemmas, the biographies of role models, reflection opportunities and ideas to serve the local community.

Flourishing individuals:	Flourishing relationships:	Digital flourishing:	Societal flourishing:
Healthy eating	Friendships	Wise use of technology	Communities
Exercise	Family relationships	Cyber bullying	Volunteering
Harmful substances	Peer pressure	Fake news	Careers
Emotional health	Managing conflict	Online relationships	Democracy

This curriculum has been designed to support a taught course of character education. It suggests a range of activities and prompts to support pupils in KS3 & 4 (aged 11-16 years) to develop their character through knowledge of virtues, reasoning about virtues and by giving them opportunities to practise virtues in their daily lives. The same types of activities are repeated throughout the book and presented using the same format. The activities are briefly explained below:



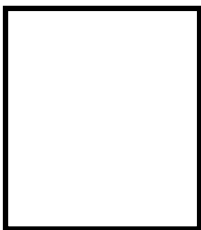
**Discussion points** are questions that are intended to be discussed in pairs or small groups. You could feedback as a whole class to share ideas.



**Moral dilemmas** for each topic appear in a thought bubble. Pupils could work individually or in small groups to discuss the dilemma. It might be helpful to work through the following questions: What is the problem? How would you feel? What virtues might be needed? What do you think is a wise thing to do?



**Reflection activities** are designed to be used at the end of a topic, and appear beside a picture of a thinking pupil. They should be completed individually and could be completed within the lesson or as homework.



**Role Models** are included to give an example of an individual or organisation who exemplify the virtues being explored. The role model gives students a practical example, highlights their story and includes a series of follow up questions to prompt further discussion.

### Structure of the curriculum

The curriculum is divided into resources for each year group from Y7-Y11. There are a series of detailed lesson plans and photocopiable resources for each year group. In KS3, there are also 1 page spread presentations available for each lesson. Within each year group, there are 4 topic areas and each topic area contains 2-3 lessons. Each lesson in KS3 & 4 is designed to last approximately 45 minutes although this may vary.

There is no blueprint for how the lessons should be incorporated into the school curriculum, or used by schools. The lessons could be used to supplement existing PSHE resources, and delivered in PSHE lessons, or in circle time. They could also be used during registration, or at the end of the day, focusing on the discussion elements. Schools could work through the whole curriculum, or choose individual lessons that are relevant to them. Schools should use and adapt the resources in the way that best works for their context.

### Why use this curriculum?

This character curriculum is unique because it uses character as a lens through which to explore issues that schools are already exploring including friendships, communities and different types of families. It is developed by teachers and in consultation with teachers, but draws on the extensive research and

philosophical grounding of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. It meets many of the statutory requirements for Health Education (2020) and Relationships Education (2020), so schools can deliver it within existing timetabled slots for these subjects, or in form time. It is designed to be flexible and so can be used wholesale as a curriculum, or schools can choose elements and lessons that meet their particular needs.

### **What is character education?**

The goal of character education is one that can be easily agreed upon – human beings who flourish. Human beings who flourish not only achieve their own potential but also live meaningfully and harmoniously in thriving communities with others.

Drawing on the ancient wisdom of Aristotle, a key component of flourishing is the acquisition and development of virtues such as kindness, generosity, courage and honesty. Therefore, character education includes all explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people develop positive personal strengths called virtues.

Character education is the responsibility of all adults who have contact with children and young people. In school, virtues can be caught through the culture, ethos and positive example of school staff. They can also be taught explicitly through educational experiences that equip students with the language, knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes that enable character development. Finally, schools can provide opportunities that support students to seek, desire and freely pursue their own character development.

Further explanation of these ideas can be found in the Jubilee Centre's *A Framework for Character Education*, available at: <https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/media/news/article/5514/New-A-Framework-for-Character-Education-in-Schools-Published>.

The new curriculum materials support schools to deliver the 'taught' aspect of character education by providing detailed lesson plans which cover a range of familiar topics, e.g. democracy and volunteering through a character lens.

### **Why do we need a character curriculum?**

Character education is receiving a renewed level of attention in British educational debate, leading to it becoming an explicit, key objective in recent education policy. It is one of the stated priorities of the Department of Education (DfE). The inclusion of character education, in the new OFSTED framework for inspection, under the personal development heading, has further cemented its status in English education. Inspectors will make a judgement on the personal development of learners in schools by evaluating the extent to which, 'The curriculum and the provider's wider work support learners to develop their character – including their resilience, confidence and independence – and help them know how to keep physically and mentally healthy.'

Furthermore, there seems to be a wider, growing recognition that character traits, including resilience, self-regulation and gratitude play a role in enabling young people to achieve a wide range of positive outcomes including academic attainment, health and wellbeing, and life satisfaction. This wide spread consensus is evident by the results of a DfE survey of 880 schools in 2017 which showed that 97% of

schools surveyed sought to promote desirable character traits among their students. Furthermore, a poll by Populus and the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues found that 87% of parents surveyed felt that schools should have a focus on character development. Therefore, character education has support from current policy makers, schools and parents.

However, just fewer than 17% of the 880 schools surveyed as part of a DfE 2017 report into character education had a formalised plan or policy in place for character education. Furthermore, only 25% of schools had a dedicated lead for character education, although almost all (97%) schools sought to promote desirable character traits among their students. Currently, too much of school provision has a scattergun approach, lacking an underpinning rationale.

In a report on developing character skills in schools, the National Centre for Social Research stated that resources and skills are required to support practice in developing character. Participants in the report felt that the government could support schools by providing a menu or bank of tools that have been proven to work. A taught course allows students to explore, understand and practise difficult concepts; strengthening and informing what goes on elsewhere in school in terms of character education.

Therefore, it seems clear that, while teachers and leaders are keen to develop character education within their schools, they do not feel that they have the tools or resources to enable them to do so. The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, based at the University of Birmingham, is the leading research centre focused on character and virtue in the UK. Drawing on its wealth of research and experience, it is well placed to develop high quality resources to support teachers to deliver character education. A curriculum will provide one tool to allow teachers to start, or continue, to deliver explicit character education in their school.

### **Developing the curriculum**

The research team began by looking at the existing resources available to support the teaching of character education in the UK, including those developed by the Jubilee Centre. The Jubilee Centre has previously published a complete primary and secondary school character curriculum in addition to primary and secondary guides to teaching character through the curriculum. They have also produced a short intervention based on teaching character to KS2 pupils through classical stories. These resources are predominantly focused on teaching individual virtues e.g. kindness in one-off lessons. In order to make the new resource distinctive, and build on the existing materials, the team decided that, instead of teaching individual virtues, the lessons would focus on common topics that are addressed in school, e.g. bullying, and how a character approach might be used to address them.

There were several reasons for this decision to focus on issues, rather than individual virtues. Firstly, it will allow schools to use these curriculum resources within existing, timetabled subjects such as PSHE. They will be able to cover statutory curriculum content, but look at the issues from the perspective of the character development of their pupils. Looking at virtues, in the context of issues, also allows greater exploration of how different virtues might interact or collide in real life. They are rarely encountered individually. This will allow pupils to reason and apply the virtues to situations that they might encounter.

The topics to be covered were collated by primarily looking at the statutory guidance for Health and Relationships education (2020). The curriculum overview and suggested topics were presented for

feedback at both internal peer reviews with Jubilee Centre researchers and external reviews, with primary school teachers from across the UK.

Following the reviews, the researchers then created a series of lessons for each topic, ensuring that virtue literacy, virtue reasoning and opportunities for virtue practice were included. Pilot materials were produced for Year 7 which included a teacher's guide with lesson plans and resources, as well as PowerPoints for each lesson. Resources were developed alongside, and trialled by, teachers. Researchers observed lessons and asked schools to complete feedback questionnaires. This feedback was used to edit both the format and content of the curriculum.

### Further Reading:

Arthur, James and Tom Harrison (2014) *Schools of Character*. Birmingham: The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues.

Arthur, James (2003) *Education with Character: The Moral Economy of Schooling*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Arthur, James; Kristján Kristjánsson; Tom Harrison; Wouter Sanderse, and Daniel Wright (2016) *Teaching Character and Virtue in Schools*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge.

Harrison, Tom; Ian Morris, and John Ryan (2016) *Teaching Character in the Primary Classroom*. London: Sage Publications.

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017) *A Framework for Character Education*. Birmingham: Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues.

Kristjánsson, Kristján (2015) *Aristotelian Character Education*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Marshall, Lydia; Keeva Rooney; Alison Dunatchik and Neil Smith (2017) *Developing Character Skills in Schools*. London: Department for Education.

Morris, Ian (2015) *Teaching Happiness and Wellbeing in Schools*. London: Bloomsbury Education.

OFSTED (2019) *School Inspection Handbook*. Manchester: OFSTED.

Populus; Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2013) *A Framework for Character Education: Jubilee Centre's Parents' Survey*. Birmingham: Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

White, Clarissa; Jen Gibb; Jo Lea and Cathy Street (2017) *Skills in Schools: Qualitative Case studies*. London: Department for Education.