



Teaching Character: A Practical Guide

A Holistic Approach to Character Education

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Colmore Junior School has been on a character education 'journey' for the last six years and it continues to develop. Our approach has been research based, led by the work of The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, coupled with the professionalism and inclusion of our teachers and the needs of our demographic intake. We continue to explore how we can improve and imagine new character education opportunities for our pupils and constantly strive to help them on their journey to flourish, both as individuals and pro-active members of their community and society.

Teaching character at Colmore takes a variety of forms, but it is at the heart of all we do. This guide will cover the points of teaching character through a school and stakeholder wide shared vision and ethos, leadership, language, planning through and across the academic curriculum, wider and enriching opportunities and character development through peer-to-peer teaching.

At Colmore we have designed and implemented a strong culture of character education through our '7 Key Principles'. This is the way that all pupils and other stakeholders identify and explore moral and ethical themes at our school. These are:

- Leadership
- Globally and Locally Aware
- Independence
- Resilience
- Creativity
- Healthy and Well
- Inclusivity



All staff use these principles to help discuss and teach about our character at Colmore. These principles appear in all of the School Improvement Planning (SIP) documents and staff identify explicit opportunities within Preparation Planning and Assessment time to teach character through various lessons each week. These opportunities are also identified by subject leaders in the yearly academic planning process. Involving the staff with planning at this level means that we are able to pinpoint explicit teaching opportunities within and across our curriculum areas, giving teachers the time to plan properly about how *they*

choose to tackle the issues being taught. We considered this the best approach to develop the virtue literacy within our pupils.

We have taken a top-down approach at Colmore, with our leadership team being instrumental in the development and implementation of our '7 Key Principles'. This was deemed the first step on our journey that was absolutely necessary. Having a leadership team devoted to the underlying principle of character being at the heart of all we do, has been vital to get where we are now. One of the most important aspects of the Senior Leadership Team's involvement has been the authenticity around the development of a shared language and providing the time and space for staff to develop their own thinking around the area through transformational leadership.

The principles we have developed are used as a way of embedding a shared language of character. Each assembly has a character focus for the week, where current moral and ethical issues are highlighted. These will then become a focus for the week and discussions/activities will be planned around them for the pupils, forming daily engagement in our classrooms. Teaching this way re-enforces the idea of being able to solve dilemmas, but also maintains a priority on using and developing a language around virtues.

Our enrichment activities are also focussed on teaching character. We actively seek to invite MPs, Judges, Police Officers and other public sector professionals to come and speak and engage with our pupils so that they can understand and identify how our democracy works and indeed how their democratic education works. We hold a trip to Parliament twice a year so that pupils can develop aspirational ideas and see their democracy in action in the hope that their idea of service and civic character can develop through practical demonstrations. We are also lucky enough to have pupils invited to the Jubilee Centre's MA course to speak to students. This allows the pupils at Colmore to develop their leadership as they plan and deliver the presentations to other school leaders.

Outside of our principles, we discuss and encourage the development of service to others and gratitude, both of which we feel are important for the formation of civic character. These are demonstrated through the numerous charitable events that take place at our school, many of them the ideas of our pupils. Our Pupil Voice team regularly meet to discuss new ways in which we might be able to benefit those in our community that are struggling

or are less fortunate than ourselves. This brings to the fore of their minds what it means to do something for someone else in an altruistic sense and to remember and be grateful for the things that we have in our own lives. We actively encourage peer-to-peer learning when it comes to these issues, as the pupils are often able to explain things through the actions to others in a very effective way. Learning through examples like this, we feel allows our pupils to use the language of virtue in their own way.

Essentially we involve the teaching of character at every available point for all stakeholders. We ensure that the relationships between teachers and pupils are based on that of character education and that the examples they are exposed to are meaningful and participatory. Relationships with parents are ones where they can engage with the school and the pupils by using the same shared language and celebrating those achievements that are rooted in virtuous behaviour. Our recruitment process is based largely on the ability of the candidate to discuss character education and how they would role model this to their pupils. Continuing professional development (CPD) is aligned to the needs of our character education development and most of our staff have undertaken the free CPD course that was created by the Jubilee Centre.

There are many more dimensions to teaching character at Colmore than can be mentioned in this paper. Suffice to say, we believe that we teach character through the caught, taught and sought approach with a shared language, shared vision and ethos, and through autonomous professionals who have had time to think about the area.