

Teacher Training Workshop for Secondary Trainees: Character and Character Education in Schools

Additional Workshop Notes

These notes support the delivery of a training workshop for trainee teachers, providing additional information for teacher educators in the delivery of the workshop*

**numbers correspond to the slide numbers in the PowerPoint presentation*

Recommended delivery method:

- *1 hour 15 minute Introductory Workshop (notes provided)*
- *Follow-up seminars throughout the training programme which address areas covered in the workshop*

1: These slides provide an introduction to the theory and practice of character education in schools from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham.

2: The [Jubilee Centre](#) is a research centre based at the University of Birmingham, founded in 2012. It is the largest research centre in the world dedicated to moral character and virtues. It has informed the DfE, Ofsted and policy makers, such as the Secretary of State for Education. The Centre has established a distance-learning [MA in Character Education](#) (the first and only one in the world). It employs 25 people from a range of disciplines, including psychology, education and philosophy. It conducts world-leading research and developmental work, with young people (at all school levels) and professionals. It has an international impact in over 25 countries and has worked with teachers and government ministers in these countries, as well as regional UNICEF programmes.

3-7: Education is more than just the inculcation of knowledge. As teachers, we have greater moral responsibility than many other professionals. Teachers can be thought of as *in loco parentis* (in place of the parent).





8: Remind trainees to record any questions they have throughout the workshop – to be addressed during or following the workshop (they can also be addressed in follow-up seminar sessions).

9: Virtues – the Jubilee Centre uses the language of ‘virtues’, but these are often referred to as values, traits, dispositions or character strengths within schools. The term virtue in this definition does not carry a religious association; it refers to ‘good’, ‘goodness’, what is ‘right’, ‘morality’ etc. Similarly character education is often referred to as to moral education.

10: The Jubilee Centre’s [A Framework for Character Education in Schools \(2017\)](#) follows a neo-Aristotelian approach to character education (*for more information on this approach look at the further reading section*) and is available to download for free on the Jubilee Centre’s website. It has been sent to every secondary school in the country and 4,500 primary schools. It explains the key principles of character education and has been adopted around the world. Research has also been conducted within the professions of nursing, business, law and the army, as well as with marginalised young people. The reports are also available to download for free on the Centre’s website.

11: Individuals can respond well, or less well, to the challenges they face in everyday life, and the virtues are those character traits that enable human beings to respond appropriately to a range of situations. These character traits enable people to live, cooperate and learn with others in a way that is peaceful, neighbourly and morally justifiable.

Character education teaches the acquisition and strengthening of virtues: the traits that sustain a well-rounded life and a thriving society. Human flourishing requires the acquisition and development of intellectual, moral, and civic virtues, as well as performance virtues (these make up the *Building Blocks of Character*).

No definitive list of virtues can be given, as the virtues will (to a certain extent) be relative to individual constitution, developmental stage and social circumstance. Although virtues can be divided up into different categories, they form a coherent, mutually supportive whole in a well-rounded life, and character education is all about their integration, guided by the overarching intellectual virtue of practical wisdom or ‘good sense’ (discussed on slide 16).

12: All developing human beings will need to possess a host of intellectual virtues, such as curiosity and critical thinking, which guide their quest for knowledge and information. Among the intellectual virtues, one deserves a special mention. That is the virtue which the ancient Greeks called *phronesis*, which will be discussed on slide 16. *It would be useful here to provide examples of intellectual virtues within the context of teaching/the classroom.*





13: It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of the moral virtues that should be promoted in all schools. Moreover, schools may decide to prioritise certain virtues over others in light of the school's history, ethos, location or specific student population. Moral virtues hold a specific role within character, whereby they have a bearing on other types of virtues, ensuring they serve morally respectable ends.

14: Schools need to promote specific civic virtues, such as civility, service, citizenship, and volunteering, which help students understand their ties to society and their responsibilities within it.

15: All human beings need personal traits that enable them to manage their lives effectively. These traits are sometimes called performance virtues, or 'enabling virtues', to distinguish them from the specifically moral ones. All good programmes of character education will include the cultivation of performance virtues, but they will also explain to students that those virtues derive their ultimate value from serving morally acceptable ends, in particular from being enablers and vehicles of the intellectual, moral and civic virtues.

Resilience is commonly promoted in schools; however, when focused on it must be made clear that the performance virtues are 'good' if employed in a way that is morally 'right' – a gang member can show resilience, confidence or determination.

16: *Phronesis* is an intellectual virtue which can also be called practical wisdom, or 'good sense'. It is often described to pupils as 'good sense' – doing the 'right' thing, for the 'right' reason, in the 'right' amount at the 'right' time. Aristotle refers to *phronesis* as enabling us to find the 'golden mean' between excess and deficiency of the virtues. It requires careful deliberation and judgement. The ability to learn from experience (and to make mistakes) is at the centre of it.

This is an important virtue for teachers when tackling ethical or moral dilemmas within in the profession (see slide 17/18). It is also important for pupils as they also face dilemmas e.g. between loyalty to friends and honesty to the teacher.

17: *Take suggestions and discuss examples (an example dilemma is provided on the next slide).*

18: *What virtues/values are in conflict here? Discuss together and take suggestions.*





19: There is no blueprint or magic formula for delivering character education. Character ‘caught’ is the implicit side of character education. It is displayed in the school’s ethos/culture which teachers are expected to embrace. It can be seen throughout the curriculum, in all subjects and is often visible ‘outside’ the curriculum e.g. assembly, volunteering, playtime, clubs.

Character ‘caught’ also focuses on the individual teacher’s character.

20: Research has shown that adults remember their teachers because of their character; both positive and negative. *This is an opportunity to provide examples of teachers from your past and why you wanted to become an educator – trainees may also wish to share their motivations.*

Emphasise that teachers often enter the profession for moral reasons and motivations (for example to help children learn, to impact their lives, to ‘give something back’ and to develop good people). This links to character education because character education is about enabling children to flourish as individuals and within society.

21: The Jubilee Centre’s Report [Character Education in UK Schools](#) identifies teachers’ and parents’ perceptions of character education. The final statistic emphasises the need for ITE providers and schools to discuss and work on these areas with trainees.

22: This report is based on research conducted with trainee teachers in 2018.

23-24: *These are examples illustrating the importance of character and character education within publications.*

25: Teachers may be the first positive role model a pupil has. They are role models at all times – children pick up on tone, attitude, body language, eye contact etc. This slide provides a snapshot of how the character of the teacher is addressed within the *Teachers’ Standards*. The *Teachers’ Standards* require high standard of ethics – dignity, respect, tolerance; to meet these, they must set high standards, be consistent, use good sense (*phronesis*), and be aware of moral/ethical dilemmas that occur within teaching.

26: These are examples of how different virtues can be demonstrated by a teacher and their importance within the profession. *Other examples can be provided – this opens up a good opportunity for discussion at different stages of a trainee teacher’s training.*





27: *Another ethical dilemma for discussion.*

28: We now turn to how character education can be ‘taught’ in school – this overlaps with how it can be ‘caught’ – the two are not mutually exclusive, but mutually supportive. *How do the trainees think character can be caught/taught in the school? (besides through the teacher’s role-modelling).*

29: There is no magic blueprint for a ‘taught’ approach. To develop knowledge and understanding we need a deliberate curriculum that supports and is supported by caught character education. This helps pupils to understand virtue terms, what they mean and what they ‘look like’ in real life. ‘Taught’ character education is planned for and deliberate. Teachers and staff are conscious of how what they teach contributes to character development. This can be inside and outside of the classroom.

30: As will be understood from the previous slides, character education isn’t just about ‘grit’. Some schools and research publications seem to focus solely on performance virtues. Character education is about the school environment and curriculum. Indeed, many schools have particular virtues which they prioritise over others in light of the school’s history, ethos, location or specific student population.

31: The [Schools of Virtue](#) report, which presents research from 3 schools in which character education is a central part of their ethos and programme of education, provides details on how schools can teach character and foster it within their curriculum, as well as within their school culture.

Character education can be part of a lesson aim/objective/outcome – it does not have to be the sole focus. Virtues can be taught about explicitly, for example in assemblies, through discussing moral dilemmas, or reflecting upon the actions of famous/historical figures. Reflection time for pupils on the virtues is extremely important, for example when discussing the actions of historical figures/events from history, pupils should be guided in reflection to consider how this is relevant to them, what lessons can be learned, how it relates to their own lives etc.

Character education is cross curricular. For example, virtues can be taught in subject lessons (e.g. perseverance when tackling new concepts in maths; compassion in science when thinking about animal testing/product development; community awareness in history; humility and honesty of characters in stories within English etc.)

32: These are examples of how character education can be explicitly ‘taught’ within lessons.





33: The [Knightly Virtues Project resources](#) are highly popular in schools. Although they were designed for year 6 pupils, they are appropriate for year 7 and 8 pupils. The stories and activities facilitate the development of reading and writing, as well as character education. They are engaging for pupils and have been found to be popular amongst reluctant readers. This programme was designed to help teach moral character in schools using high quality classic and real-life stories. Examples of stories include: The Merchant of Venice, Don Quixote, Beowulf, Gareth and Lynette, Anne Frank etc.

The Project shows how such stories can be used for the purpose of character education. All resources are available online from the Jubilee Centre's website. Lesson plans are easily adaptable. They include teacher notes, lesson plans and pupil resources.

The [Virtue, Vice and Verse](#) resources were designed along the same principles as the *Knightly Virtues* but were intended more specifically to teach about virtuous character to secondary school pupils through poetry. The project focused on different poems from a range of well-known and established poets, including Wilfred Owen, Percy Shelley, William Blake, and Emily Bronte. The resources challenge pupils to think about how the poems make them feel, and how virtues and vices are portrayed in each poem, or pair of poems. Similarly, PowerPoints, teacher guides and pupil resources are all available online from the Jubilee Centre's website.

34-35: Funded by the Department for Education (DfE), the [Teaching Character Through Subjects](#) project worked with 29 teachers from 28 state funded schools to create an innovative resource for building character within 14 subjects across the secondary school curriculum. The materials were developed by teachers, for teachers, were trialed in schools and are presented as suites of resources for each subject.

Each suite provides editable examples of ways character can be taught through secondary curriculum subjects. Each suite can be adapted to fit different contexts and serves as inspiration for the development of additional materials that further explore character through subjects and the secondary school curriculum.

The materials illustrate how teachers can incorporate teaching character in different subjects/ lessons and which virtues may be best-suited to each subject. Resources and example lesson plans are available online from the Jubilee Centre's website.

36: The [My Character](#) resources were developed in collaboration with young people and education professionals. They encourage young people to think about who they are as well as who they want to become. Focusing on 8 character virtues, the materials contain activities, quotes, biographies of inspirational people and actions that the young people can use to help develop their character. The aim is to guide and stimulate self-reflection in young people, in the belief that this will encourage them to





discuss goals, strategies, and performance and ultimately help them to become more accomplished and successful adults.

37: Character education occurs in and out of the classroom – it also includes extra-curricular activities/enrichment activities. Providing a safe place to practise the virtues in a new context helps to make the link between what is learnt and what is put into practice (these activities help to bridge the gap). Many schools refer to this as ‘enrichment’.

It may be useful to look at the University of Birmingham School’s [Enrichment Programme and video](#).

Reflection question for trainees – how are you/could you contribute to enrichment at your school, e.g. running clubs etc.?

38: There are a range of free resources available online via the Jubilee Centre’s website or app. The resources have been designed by teachers and experts in the field. All have been trialed in schools and have been evaluated and edited based on teacher/pupil feedback. Lesson plans, presentations and resources are provided, e.g. [Virtue, Vice and Verse](#) (teaching character and virtues through classical poetry); [My Character](#); [Teaching Character Through Subjects](#); [Character Education: A Taught Course for 11 to 16 year olds](#); [Gratitude and Compassion in the Classroom](#).

The Jubilee Centre does not aim to be prescriptive. In producing these resources, it is expected that teachers ‘dip into’ different parts and adapt these as necessary. Quite often, they are used as inspiration for teachers’ own lessons.

39: Finally, one of the aims of character education should be that pupils actively and autonomously seek to develop their character and virtues. This involves the provision of opportunities for pupils to actively seek to develop their own character (for example through opportunities to engage with and support the local community, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and Youth Social Action).

40: <https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/> Through the website, trainees can access the Jubilee Centre blog and teaching resources (which are accessible via the website and free to download; hard copies of certain resources can be requested). The website contains the largest library of character/moral education texts. It also provides opportunities to get involved with research projects for individual teachers or schools. Anyone can sign up to the free monthly newsletter. *Please encourage trainees to get in touch – contact details are on the website.*





41: The free app can be downloaded on Android and Apple via the App store. Search 'The Jubilee Centre' in 'Education'.

Follow-up sessions:

Seminar sessions throughout the teacher training programme will provide an opportunity for trainees to address questions they may have and to re-visit the content of the workshop. They could be encouraged to reflect upon what forms of character education they have seen in their placement schools, how the character of the teacher is important and how character development is addressed through the school's culture/ethos.

Further Reading:

Arthur, J., Fullard, M., Watts, P. and Moller, F. (2018) *Character Perspectives of Student Teachers: Initial Insights*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/18002_LowRes.pdf

Arthur, J. and Harrison, T. (2014) *Schools of Character*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

<http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/character-education/SchoolsOfCharacterPDF.pdf>

Arthur, J., Harrison, T., Burn, E. and Moller, F. (2017) *Schools of Virtue: Character Education in Three Birmingham Schools: Research Report*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

<http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/SchoolsOfVirtueResearchReport.pdf>

Arthur, J., Harrison, T., Carr, D., Kristjánsson, K. and Davison, I. (2014) *Knightly Virtues: Enhancing Virtue Literacy through Stories: Research Report*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/KVPDF/KnightlyVirtuesReport.pdf

Arthur, J., Harrison, T., Kristjánsson, K., Davison, I., Hayes, D. and Higgins, J. (2014b) *My Character: Enhancing Future Mindedness in Young People – A Feasibility Study*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

<http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/My%20Character%20PDFs/My%20Character%20pdf%20final.pdf>





Arthur, J., Kristjánsson, K., Cooke S., Brown, E. and Carr, D. (2015) *The Good Teacher: Understanding Virtues in Practice: Research Report*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/The_Good_Teacher_Understanding_Virtues_in_Practice.pdf

Arthur, J., Kristjánsson, K., Harrison, T., Sanderse, W., and Wright, D. (2017) *Teaching Character and Virtue in Schools*. London: Routledge.

Arthur, J., Kristjánsson, K., Walker, D., Sanderse, W. and Jones, C. (2015) *Character Education in UK Schools: Research Report*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Research%20Reports/Character_Education_in_UK_Schools.pdf

Cooke, S. (2017) 'The Moral Work of Teaching: A Virtue-Ethics Approach to Teacher Education', in Clandinin, D. J. and Hsu, J. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Research on Teacher Education: Volume 1*, London: Sage, pp. 419-434.

Harrison, T., Bawden, M. and Rogerson, L. (2016) *Teaching Character Through Subjects: Educating the Virtues through and within 14 Secondary Subjects*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

<http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/1676/character-education/resources/teaching-characterthrough-subjects>

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017) *A Framework for Character Education in Schools*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, [Online], Available at:

<https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/character-education/Framework%20for%20Character%20Education.pdf>

Kristjánsson, K. (2017) *Aristotelian Character Education*. London: Routledge.

Kristjánsson, K. (2013) 'Ten Myths about Character, Virtue and Virtue Education - and Three Well-Founded Misgivings', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 61, no. 3, pp. 1-19.

