TEACHING CHARACTER EDUCATION:
WHAT WORKS
RESEARCH REPORT

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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 upon 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 over 20 academics from a range of disciplines, including: philosophy, psychology, education, theology and sociology.

With its focus on excellence, the Centre has a robust, 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, but that these have been largely 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 applications of its research evidence.

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Foreword

Schools that prioritise the teaching of character have been compared to sticks of rock – wherever you cut them, character is at their heart. Schools are enormously influential, not just on their pupils and those who work there, but on the wider communities they operate in too.

As this report states, 'acquiring the attributes necessary for flourishing should be the ultimate aim of education'. Flourishing is an underused word, but I think it is what we all want for ourselves and the next generation. The challenge is how to ensure that those in our schools do flourish – and many of us believe that this challenge is answered by the explicit prioritisation of character education and building virtue literacy.

For example, the character leaders interviewed for this report state that their pupils must learn to disagree in respectful ways. This benefits not only the individual pupil and their peers, but it is also a necessary quality in a healthy and flourishing society. Disagreements happen. How they are resolved affects all of us – particularly if leaving them unresolved or resolving them by force leads to wider conflict which benefits no one.

So, the way our schools shape our characters is of direct interest and relevance to all of us.

Building on a decade of experience at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, this latest deeply practical research into what works in the teaching of character will be invaluable for schools who are just starting on their character education journeys, as well as those who have been focused on this for some time.

The authors look at how character can be caught, taught and sought. In the course of the research, it is confirmed by schools and teachers that they use multiple teaching strategies to deliver their character education and develop a 'vision, ethos and culture'. The context of a school matters in terms of the choice of strategies to be employed. The authors make it clear there is no one path to teaching about, and developing, the character of the pupils, staff and schools successfully. Because of this, the authors arrive at 70 character education teaching strategies which can be interwoven and adopted in various ways to ensure they will be most relevant and effective for those they are directed at.

In those schools where character education is 'embedded and intentional,' there are some key prerequisites, including that a member of the school's leadership team has responsibility for character provision, and it is made a priority for the whole school. A whole school approach is necessary, and this research gives clear guidance on how that can be achieved.

The multiple approaches can involve the use of stories, exploring moral dilemmas, explicit and implicit use of curriculum time, developing a shared language of character, training for staff, residential trips and extra-curricular activities (particularly sport), the encouragement of self-reflection, a stand-alone character rewards system and bringing character into the staff recruitment process.

In the UK, in the year when we are marking Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and her life of remarkable service to the country, the thing that most people remark on are The Queen's intrinsically strong and positive character qualities. Character matters, therefore how schools, one of the most influential parts of a person's early life,

develop our character matters. The strategies in this report make successful character development achievable for all schools, and that is good for all of us.

**Rt Hon. Nicola, Baroness Morgan
of Cotes PC
Secretary of State for Education (2014-2016)Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2019-2020)**

'CHARACTER MAY BE MANIFESTED IN THE GREAT MOMENTS, BUT IT IS MADE IN THE SMALL ONES.'
Phillips Brooks

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the *Teaching Character Education: What Works* research project. This project, which began in January 2021, involved reviewing teaching resources and research data from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. The project then conducted new research to determine which character education teaching strategies work in different school settings. Drawing on this review and the empirical research collected in this study, *The Character Teaching Inventory* was developed.

This report describes the results of mixed methods research into character education, conducted with schools across England with an embedded and intentional character education provision. In total, 59 participants completed a character education leader survey, 477 participants completed a teacher survey, and 10 character education leaders took part in semi-structured interviews. This new empirical research explored which character education teaching strategies are being used in schools and what impact these strategies are perceived to have on the character development of pupils.

The findings from the review of the Jubilee Centre's work and the empirical data collected during this project informed the development of *The Character Teaching Inventory*, introduced at the end of this report. The Inventory provides a practical tool to accompany *A Framework for Character Education in Schools* (2017). The Inventory provides 70 character education teaching strategies within three categories: character caught, taught, and sought. [1]

Key findings:

- Character education leaders and teachers reported using multiple teaching strategies across character caught, taught, and sought.

- In most cases, the character education teaching strategies reported as being used by schools spanned the categories of character caught, taught, and sought, highlighting how the three categories should be viewed as interlinked and mutually supportive of each other.

- Character caught was deemed to be of particular importance in the early stages of the development of a whole school vision, ethos, and culture. Character education leaders highlighted the significance of three strategies as central to character caught – a set of priority virtues, a mission statement which explicitly references character, and a whole school shared language of character.

- Teachers considered school leaders to have had a positive impact upon their ability to deliver character education by providing a supportive environment and varied opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in character education.

- Schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision appointed a leader of character education who was an existing member of the school's leadership team.

- Primary schools reported using more character education teaching strategies than secondary schools.

The Character Teaching Inventory:

Recommendations for how school leaders can use *The Character Teaching Inventory* include the following:

- To reflect upon current character education provision.

- To design and implement an explicit approach for character education.

- To share the school's character education approach with the whole school community, including pupils, parents, and governors.

- To enhance existing strategies for teaching, evaluation, and feedback, as it relates to character education.

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[1] For definitions, see www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/framework

1 Purpose of the Report

In the UK, there has been a recent resurgence in recognising a school's role in enabling a child to flourish. However, the formation of character as an aim of education has still, at times, remained implicit rather than explicit. Since its formation in 2012, the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has provided a wealth of research and practical resources in the field of character education, which have aided schools, teachers, and professionals in developing a more explicit approach to character development. The Centre's *A Framework for Character Education in Schools* (2017) has supported practitioners in developing an understanding of the theory of character education, whilst also providing a shared language of character. From the outset, the Centre has maintained that there is no blueprint for character education and that the context in which a school operates will often determine the approach that is taken. The increased interest in character education amongst schools has been accompanied by a growing demand for guidance in character education teaching strategies that can be embedded within school settings.

The purpose of the *Teaching Character Education: What Works* research project was to discover which character education teaching strategies are commonly being used in schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision. In addition, the research team sought to discover whether these strategies are perceived to have a positive impact on pupils' character development. The project started with a review of the Centre's teaching resources and research data from the previous ten years, which identified a range of character education teaching strategies. To research whether these teaching strategies are currently being used by schools in England with an embedded and intentional character education provision, a character education leader survey and teacher survey were designed. The findings from both surveys can be found in this report and were used to inform the design of *The Character Teaching Inventory*. [2]

The Character Teaching Inventory is intended both for schools who have already begun their character education journey, and for those about to begin. The aim of the Inventory is to make more explicit the implicit aspects of character education, which are often already present in most schools, whilst also providing suggestions of new teaching strategies for schools.

This project has aimed to explore a variety of questions, including:
- Which teaching strategies for character education have been used within Jubilee Centre research and how have they been shown to work?
- What role does context play in effective teaching strategies for character education?
- What does the existing data tell us about the relationships between character caught, taught, and sought?

['IT IS OUR MORAL OBLIGATION TO GIVE EVERY CHILD THE VERY BEST EDUCATION POSSIBLE.'
Desmond Tutu]

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2 Background

2.1 CONTEXT

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues undertakes its character education research within a neo-Aristotelian model. Aristotle states that the aim of education is not just to know what virtue is, but to become good (Jubilee Centre, 2017). The central tenets of a neo-Aristotelian model are that virtues are necessary for flourishing, and that acquiring the attributes necessary for flourishing should be the ultimate aim of education. The reasons for such an approach are not only theoretical, but also recognise parents' and teachers' beliefs that fostering good character is the primary aim of education, over and above academic attainment (Harrison, Dineen and Moller, 2018).

The character education teaching strategies discussed throughout this section can be categorised according to the way in which virtue is acquired; character can be caught, taught, and sought (Jubilee Centre, 2017). If a school provides appropriate educational opportunities and experiences, then character caught and taught can develop together, leading to character sought (Arthur and Kristjánsson, 2022).

2.2 CHARACTER CAUGHT

'Character Caught: the school community of both staff and pupils provides the example, culture, and inspirational influence in a positive ethos that motivates and promotes character development' (Jubilee Centre, 2017: 9).

2.2.1 Vision, Ethos, Culture

Belonging to a school community is a deeply formative experience: it shapes pupils' character. Character education, both implicit and explicit, can permeate all subjects as well as the general school ethos. Underpinning the focus on a school's ethos is the belief that a school's approach to character education should be holistic.

A school's mission statement often includes reference to virtues, describing the kind of person it seeks to develop, including the ethical expectations of its staff and pupils (Jubilee Centre, 2017). The Centre recommends that schools decide themselves which virtues to prioritise within their mission statement to ensure that the virtues selected are context specific. A school's mission statement, outlining its priority virtues, introduces a shared language of character to the entire school community. Good teaching is underpinned by a language that allows for coherent communication of, and commitment to, shared values. Focus on a school's mission statement, priority virtues, and shared language of character may thus be classified as a caught approach to character education, initiated and enabled by senior leaders and enacted by teachers and other staff.

2.2.2 Relationships

A key purpose of character education is to create an environment in which supportive and inspiring relationships between staff, pupils, and parents can flourish. In a study of three Birmingham schools, it was found that, 'character education supported the development and maintenance of positive relationships within and across the schools – but also depended on them' (Arthur et al., 2017: 28). The importance of positive relationships can be seen in practice, for example, through pastoral care. There is also recognition that pupils are an important support network for character education, with role-modelling operating at peer level (Berkowitz, 2011). This means that pupils themselves act as exemplars and has led to recommendations that interactions between younger and older pupils should be encouraged.

2.2.3 Staff

Character education requires due attention from policy makers and senior school leadership. The National Foundation for Educational Research looked at five schools and noted that senior leaders drove character education by: placing it at the core of the school's ethos; taking a long-term approach; building a collective understanding; and maintaining focus, momentum and ongoing action (Walker, Sims and Kettlewell, 2017). The role of school leadership in character education is not simply an explicit top-down approach but one which can be seen in informal ways within the school, including role modelling by senior members of staff. As such, character education requires courageous leadership that prioritises character development. This means that school leaders not only identify a set of priority virtues but also become ambassadors of character education, committing to regular and honest self-evaluation of their character education provision.

When schools have a focus on character education, character is given prominence during the recruitment process. Selecting new staff based on their understanding of the importance of character education, as well as their pedagogical expertise, ensures that individuals recognise the moral dimension of teaching as being equally as important as subject knowledge.

Classroom practice is informed by the character of the teacher. Teachers constantly make ethical judgements and frequently exercise virtue-based reasoning beyond simply adhering to rules (Arthur et al., 2015). Therefore, teachers require good moral character to be character educators. Teachers are key role models within a school who often demonstrate a shared language of character and use informal opportunities to develop positive relationships with pupils (Arthur et al., 2017).

2.3 CHARACTER TAUGHT

'Character Taught: the school provides educational experiences in and out of the classroom that equip pupils with the language, knowledge, understanding, skills, and attributes that enable character development' (Jubilee Centre, 2017: 9).

2.3.1 The Curriculum

A school's curriculum makes character education visible; a question for schools is whether character education is taught as a discrete subject or integrated within existing curriculum subjects. Despite competing priorities and time constraints within schools, character education can permeate a whole school curriculum by being integrated across all subjects. In England, character education is most readily associated with Personal, Social, Health, and Economic education (PSHE). Importantly, however, character education is not restricted to PSHE; it lends itself to subjects from across the curriculum (for example, see Harrison, Bawden and Rogerson, 2016). It has also been shown that schools explicitly use form time or assemblies as a space for pupils to learn moral vocabulary, providing the opportunity to reflect upon character and virtue.

2.3.2 Teaching and Learning Strategies

Virtue literacy is central to many teaching and learning strategies. Virtue literacy consists of three inter-related components: (i) Virtue 'Perception'; (ii) Virtue 'Knowledge and Understanding'; and (iii) Virtue 'Reasoning'. There are two stages to enhancing virtue literacy. The first is developing a knowledge and understanding of virtue terms. The second is developing the ability and willpower to apply the virtues to real-life contexts (Jubilee Centre, 2017: 8). To develop virtue literacy, schools need to provide opportunities for pupils to exercise the virtues in practice, as well as encourage a rich discourse of virtue language. As with other character education teaching strategies, virtue literacy should be intuitively adapted to the sensitivities and requirements of individual educational settings.

Character education teaching and learning strategies are most commonly accompanied by guided reflection. Reflection is often most effective when it takes place before, during, and after an experience. A dedicated time in the school timetable for reflection allows pupils to identify, discuss, and consider changes in their understanding, attitudes, and values regarding their own character. Discussion-based learning can be used across curriculum subjects to explore character by introducing key moral questions for pupils to discuss. Whole group discussions can be facilitated and guided by the teacher to encourage pupils to provide explanations, evidence, or justifications for their own or others' actions. Within character education, both co-operative learning and independent learning allow pupils to not only discover how to work well with others, but to also take ownership and control of their own character development. In experiential learning, a school can provide varied experiences which enable a platform for learning and help to develop character with the inclusion of reflection.

2.3.3 Learning Activities and Resources

There is a long tradition of using stories as a resource for teaching character. Aristotle recognised the power of stories to illuminate and motivate moral action, and to educate with respect to emotions and desires. With research emphasising the importance of imagination in moral development (Bohlin, 2005), it has been recommended that character education be taught through literacy-based programmes. When using stories, the activities designed should include structured reflection, encouraging pupils to reflect on the different virtues exemplified in the stories, and how these virtues might apply to their own lives (Arthur et al., 2014a).

Moral dilemmas have also been shown to be an effective resource for the teaching of character education. The value of dilemmas is that they entail a level of virtue literacy that demonstrates how virtue, codes of conduct, and consequences combine and conflict (Harrison, Arthur and Burn, 2016). Such moral dilemmas function as an effective activity by activating pupils' skills in moral reasoning and providing insights into moral behaviour.

Several other activities and resources for character education have been developed by the Jubilee Centre. Journalling is an activity which allows pupils space to make connections between virtues and everyday actions; moreover, journals can 'change pupils' enduring attitudes, values, and sense of personal identity' (Hallberg, 1987: 289). The lives of moral exemplars can be used as a source of inspiration to encourage pupils to live virtuously and make good decisions in their own lives. A school must think carefully about the moral exemplars they wish to prioritise. Although pupils enjoy learning about inspirational figures from history or current affairs, it is often difficult for pupils to emulate the character of such figures when the life of the inspirational person seems so far removed from pupils' own life experiences. It has been recommended that schools use attainable and relevant moral exemplars who resonate with pupils' own lives (Han et al., 2017). The use of drama and the creative arts has also been found to foster the development of character, encouraging pupils to go outside their comfort zone and attempt new and challenging activities (Arthur and Harrison, 2014).

2.4 CHARACTER SOUGHT

'Character Sought: the school provides varied opportunities that generate the formation of personal habits and character commitments. These help pupils over time to seek, desire, and freely pursue their character development' (Jubilee Centre, 2017: 9).

Character sought involves a pupil reflecting, planning, and setting their own character commitments. Character sought is more likely to develop as a pupil matures, but it can be introduced and guided by their teacher at an early age. Through guided reflection, pupils can consider their own behaviour, thoughts, emotions, and desires. Pupils seeking to develop their character will make wise decisions, prioritising friendships that enable them to enhance their character in positive ways, such as through service to others. This does not occur in a vacuum, since a good education would have already provided character caught and taught, which means that implicit commitments to the virtues will already be in place. Parents, teachers, and other moral educators can plant the seeds of *phronesis* [3] development from an early age by motivating the sought element of character, encouraging pupils to reflect on what kind of person they want to become.

2.4.1 Enrichment

Many enrichment experiences are to be found outside of the classroom, including through extra-curricular activities offered by a school. It has been found that teachers believe children learn to 'be' through extra-curricular activities, and that character development can occur by allowing young people to practise virtue in a safe space (Arthur *et al*., 2015). Pupils have expressed appreciation for extra-curricular activities, indicating positive experiences of enrichment. It is the perception of teaching staff that extra-curricular activities contribute towards the development of positive relationships between staff and pupils through the chance to explore a shared interest (Arthur *et al*. 2017).

2.4.2 Social Action and Volunteering

Youth social action can be used for developing character. Through social action, virtues such as volunteering and caring can be developed in both formal and informal settings. Schools are best placed to ensure that social action is planned in such a way that it incorporates safe spaces for reflection. Social action experiences have the potential for a double benefit, for both the individual benefactor and the community beneficiary (Arthur, Harrison and Taylor, 2015). This factor underpins many social action programmes, for example, the #iwill [4] campaign projects that had a clear benefit for both the individual and the local community.

'THE GREAT END OF EDUCATION...IS TO PERSUADE AND TO INSPIRE THE SINCERE LOVE OF VIRTUE.'

George Turnbull

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[3] *Phronesis* is the integrative virtue, developed through experience and critical reflection, which enables us to perceive, know, desire and act with good sense. This includes discerning, deliberative action in situations where virtues collide.

[4] https://www.iwill.org.uk/

3 Methodology

The *Teaching Character Education: What Works* research project was a study involving character education leaders and teachers from schools in England identified as having an embedded and intentional character education provision. The study was designed to deepen understanding of which character education teaching strategies are most commonly being used in schools and the perceived impact such strategies have on the development of pupils' character. The study led to the development of an inventory of character education teaching strategies. Whilst it is acknowledged that character education within schools will always be distinct, the researchers were interested in discovering whether any generalisations could be drawn from across different schools and settings. This section explains the rationale, design, and methods used in this project.

3.1 RATIONALE

Mixed methods research enabled the research team to capture the views of character education leaders and teachers from a wide variety of schools. It has been argued that mixed methods research offers the best chance of obtaining robust data when exploring the intricacies of issues of character (Arthur *et al.*, 2014b). The research included:

- Analysis of previous research and teaching resources from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues on character education.
- Two voluntary online surveys – one conducted with character education leaders and the other with teachers from schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision.
- Semi-structured interviews undertaken with character education leaders from schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision.

The online surveys were designed to capture data from a large number of participants across multiple schools and aimed to help the researchers to understand which character education teaching strategies are used effectively as part of a school's character education provision. The research team also undertook in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a sample of character education leaders. A greater emphasis was placed on the quantitative data, as these allowed a more extensive exploration of general trends in character education; qualitative analysis of the interview data then revealed more detailed perceptions of what works in character education within specific schools.

3.2 SURVEYS

The research team created two surveys, one for character education leaders and the other for teachers. The character education leader survey focussed on whole school strategies with respondents answering on behalf of their school; the teacher survey focussed on individual teachers' classroom practice. The surveys were based on the character education teaching strategies identified within the review of the Centre's research and teaching resources.

The character education leader survey consisted of the following five sections:
1. Respondents' views on nine character education teaching strategies, relating to a school's **vision, ethos, and culture.** Participants were asked to identify whether their school had implemented such strategies and, if so, to what extent they agreed that this had had a positive impact on their school's character education provision.
2. Respondents' views on four types of **relationship**. Participants were asked to identify whether their school had established such relationships and, if so, to what extent they agreed that each relationship had had a positive impact on their school's character education provision.
3. Respondents' views on seven strategies for teaching character through the **curriculum.** Participants were asked which of the strategies their school used to teach character education and, if so, to what extent they agreed that these strategies had had a positive impact on the development of their pupils' character.
4. Respondents' views on eight **enrichment activities.** Participants were asked if their school used the enrichment activities to explicitly focus on character and, if so, to what extent they agreed that these enrichment activities had had a positive impact on the development of their pupils' character.
5. This section included questions related to the participants' **demographic information.**

The teacher survey focussed on individual teachers' classroom practice and consisted of the following five sections:
1. Respondents' views on their **practice as character educators.**
2. Respondents' views on five types of **relationship**. Participants were asked to rate each of the relationships from 1-7, with 7 having the most positive Perceived Impact on the development of their pupils' character.
3. Respondents' views on 12 **activities and resources**. Participants were asked which of the activities and resources they used to teach character education and, if so, to what extent they agreed that these activities and resources had had a positive impact on the development of their pupils' character.
4. Respondents' views on seven **teaching and learning strategies.** Participants were asked which of the teaching and learning strategies they used to teach character education and, if so, to what extent they agreed that the teaching and learning strategies had had a positive impact on the development of their pupils' character.
5. This section included questions related to the participants' **demographic information.**

3.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

One-to-one semi-structured interviews took place during a visit by the researchers to the participant's school, or via online video conferencing. An interview schedule was devised to address the main research questions. The interviews included questions based on the following themes:

- the participant's specific role within their school's character education provision;
- the impact of the school's learning environment on the development of their pupils' character;
- the importance of their school's vision, ethos, and culture;
- the ways in which their school established positive relationships; and
- the most effective strategies for teaching character education.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS

The research team recruited schools with an existing embedded and intentional character education provision as these schools were best placed to report on character education teaching strategies. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select the primary and secondary schools involved in this research. As an initial stage, the research team recruited participants by drawing on an extensive database of schools already established by the Centre. Additional schools were then selected using a thorough process undertaken by the research team, which included conducting a detailed analysis of school websites to identify details pertaining to character education, for example through the

Table 1: Total Number of Participants by School Setting

School Setting	Completed Survey Responses (100% completed)		
	Teacher Survey	Character Education Leader Survey	Interviews
Primary	145	20	5
Secondary	332	39	5
Total	477	59	10

curriculum. This was then followed by in-depth conversations between the research team and individual schools, via online video conferencing, to further ascertain suitability for the study. The surveys were then distributed to 71 schools across England. The schools provided a range of contexts in which character education was implemented.

The participants to be interviewed were chosen purposively from those who had completed the character education leader survey. It was ensured that there was an equal number of primary and secondary interviewees from a range of schools across England. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of participants who completed each survey and the semi-structured interviews.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Surveys

Responses from both surveys were entered separately into an Excel spreadsheet where they were cleaned and filtered, with only participants who gave complete survey responses included in the final data analysis. The data was subsequently exported into SPSS version 27 for analysis. A MANOVA tested for differences in the use of various character education teaching strategies across primary and secondary settings. Pearson's Chi-square tests were used to test whether various teaching strategies were used disproportionately in primary versus secondary schools. Exploratory factor analyses were used to determine whether those who used character education teaching strategies in one domain were also likely to use them in another. Finally, one-sample T-tests were used to find out whether, within a primary and secondary school setting, certain character education teaching strategies were found to be significantly more useful than a 'neutral' score. Descriptive statistics for samples were also reported.

3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the research team, with subsequent thematic analysis undertaken using the NVivo version 12 software package. As an initial stage, the researchers became familiar with the data and the interview transcriptions were then coded using the character education teaching strategies included in the character education leader survey and teacher survey. This ensured that each semi-structured interview was being coded against a comprehensive list of all teaching strategies identified by the researchers.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In order to explore what works in character education, the research team focussed on those schools which already had an embedded and intentional character education provision. Consequently, purposive sampling was used, meaning that it was not possible to draw comparisons between those schools that explicitly focussed on character education and those which did not. This study only included participants who completed 100% of the survey. Missing-at-random analyses was not conducted as the majority of excluded cases provided almost no data. The sampling was opportunistic and relied upon the willingness of character education leaders and teachers to participate. Some of the participants may have been particularly interested in the subject and may have had particularly strong views, therefore self-selection bias cannot be avoided. Due to the self-report nature of large parts of the research, it is possible that responses may be subject to the inherent problems of: (i) social-desirability bias, whereby participants respond in a way they believe will result in themselves being viewed favourably; (ii) self-deception bias, whereby the way one sees oneself is different to how that individual is in practice; and (iii) self-confirmation bias, whereby participants respond in ways that uphold their prior beliefs and discard anything that contradicts those beliefs. The research team were confident, however, that with the careful explanation and introduction of the surveys and interviews, some of these limitations were reduced.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Full ethical approval for the project was granted by the University of Birmingham Ethics Committee. The research team ensured that all participants understood their commitment to the project and their right to withdraw or modify their contribution. This was achieved by providing all research respondents with comprehensive information sheets and consent or opt-out forms before data collection. Participants were asked to opt into the study and to provide their informed consent before the surveys were completed and before each interview was conducted. Survey respondents were fully informed of the purpose and scope of the research and were able to withdraw their involvement by discontinuing completion of the survey or by contacting the research team within four weeks from the date of survey completion. Interview participants were able to withdraw from the study during the interview or within four weeks from the date of their interview. All data has been treated confidentially and any potential identification of participants has been avoided through the anonymisation of interview transcripts and survey responses.

> '**GOOD CHARACTER IS NOT FORMED IN A WEEK OR A MONTH. IT IS CREATED LITTLE BY LITTLE, DAY BY DAY.** '
>
> **Heraclitus**

4 Findings

This section discusses the findings from the research, organised into three categories: character caught, taught, and sought. Findings from both the character education leader survey and teacher survey are included and, where appropriate, are supplemented with findings from the semi-structured interviews with character education leaders. Where mean Perceived Impact scores across primary and secondary schools are described as 'different', a *significant* difference based on inferential testing was found. Where mean Perceived Impact scores across primary and secondary schools are described as 'similar', a *non-significant* difference was found.

4.1 CHARACTER CAUGHT

4.1.1 Vision, Ethos, and Culture
Findings from the character education leader survey which relate to vision, ethos, and culture are presented in Table 2. Participants were asked whether their school used the specific character education strategy, and, if so, to what extent they agreed that this strategy had had a positive impact on their school's character education provision. Participants' responses to the latter question were then converted into a Perceived Impact score (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) and a mean score was calculated from the participants who responded. The participants' responses have been separated into school settings: primary schools (*n* = 20) and secondary schools (*n* = 39) so that differences can be observed.

The findings in Table 2 demonstrate that schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision use multiple character education strategies to develop a vision, ethos, and culture. Out of the nine strategies surveyed, primary schools used 7.7 on average; whilst secondary schools used 6.6. The mean Perceived Impact score for all nine strategies was similar in primary schools (4.54; *SD* = .41) and secondary schools (4.26; *SD* = .69) suggesting that all nine character education strategies can be beneficial across both school settings.

When examining the top five used strategies and top five mean Perceived Impact scores, it was observed that four out of the five strategies

Table 2: Character Education Leader Survey - Character Caught: Vision, Ethos, and Culture

Character Caught: Vision, Ethos, and Culture	Does your school have the following whole school practice or initiative? [5]		Mean Perceived Impact Score (out of 5)	
	Primary (*n* = 20)	Secondary (*n* = 39)	Primary	Secondary
A set of priority virtues	20 (100%)	37 (95%)	4.75	4.59
A mission statement which explicitly references character (e.g. virtues or values)	16 (80%)	34 (87%)	4.56	4.42
A whole school shared language of character	20 (100%)	32 (82%)	4.84	4.41
A distinct character education policy	13 (65%)	13 (33%)	4.54	4.08
A character education focus within other school policies	15 (75%)	28 (72%)	4.33	4.11
A focus on character when recruiting staff	18 (90%)	26 (67%)	4.33	4.31
An induction process for new staff which includes character education	16 (80%)	27 (69%)	4.50	4.11
Methods to evaluate provision of character education	15 (75%)	23 (59%)	4.47	4.09
An approach for recognising and celebrating pupils' good character	20 (100%)	38 (97%)	4.74	4.45

were the same across primary and secondary schools. These were: a set of priority virtues; a mission statement which explicitly references character; a whole school shared language of character; and an approach for recognising and celebrating pupils' good character. Through the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders emphasised the importance of selecting a set of priority virtues and provided detailed descriptions of the process their school underwent in selecting their priority virtues:

We went out and we spoke to […] our entire school community so we surveyed parents, students, teachers, local bus drivers, local shops, universities, apprenticeship providers. Getting collective by-in and taking that democratic leadership approach was absolutely essential for us.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 1

We asked every member of our school society from children, staff, parents, governors, cleaners, lunchtime supervisors – which five virtues do you feel are the most fundamental for every child in our school to leave here with?
Primary School Character Education Leader 1

Character education leaders also explained how the selection of a set of priority virtues influenced the development of their mission statement, outlining how a set of priority virtues and a mission statement go hand in hand when developing a whole school vision, ethos, and culture:

Making sure 100% that everybody knows the 'where' you're going and 'why' so that's your […] vision and the why is your mission statement. And start there, that's your kind of building blocks: get your set of values, get your mission statement.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 3

Our mission statement underpins everything that we're trying to do, so to suggest that the pupils need to be able to flourish in life – that is something that is supported by the virtues.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 1

A shared language of character was given high importance throughout the semi-structured interviews. Character education leaders explained how a shared language of character had permeated many aspects of school life, including: interactions with parents, managing pupil behaviour, delivery of assemblies, the physical environment, pastoral care, the taught curriculum, and enrichment activities. Character education leaders explained how a shared language of character not only helped to develop the character of their pupils, but also provided a lens through which to communicate with pupils, parents, and staff in a way which was understood and embraced by all:

Making a common language that can be used in any situation, in any classroom so the same assembly but with more intentional character, the same discussion around Romeo and Juliet's relationship but with an intentional use of character language, PSHE but with an intentional use of character language, so it's about having that language that you can share.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 4

That language is just natural to be used as they would in any other lesson, it's just part of what we do.
Primary School Character Education Leader 1

Character education leaders discussed the importance of staff role modelling a common language of character, highlighting the role that staff play in a caught approach to character education. This was also highlighted in the

character education leader survey findings. The percentage of primary school character education leaders who reported that their school had a focus on character when recruiting staff was 90%, compared to 67% of secondary school character education leaders. Similarly, 80% of primary school character education leaders reported they had an induction process for new staff which included character education, compared to 69% of secondary school character education leaders. However, during the semi-structured interviews, only secondary school character education leaders referenced staff recruitment or induction:

We start off by school recruitment. We have questions about the virtues so there is an expectation that every teacher that is recruited at our school is a teacher of the subject, a teacher of literacy, and a teacher of character.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 2

It doesn't matter if you're applying to be a member of the site team, a senior leader, or a subject leader, you're first and foremost applying to be a teacher of character and that's made very clear to staff both in the application process but also then in formal interview.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 1

As can be seen in Table 2, recognising and celebrating character was given high importance. During the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders explained the importance of recognising examples of good character alongside examples of good academic achievement. Six of the character education leaders described how their school had developed a stand-alone rewards system for character, with examples of pupils personifying good character being celebrated in classrooms, assemblies, and with parents:

It is recognising when children have shown those virtues […] [we] might kind of celebrate a wonderful piece of writing they've done for the English element but also we celebrate how their character enhanced or enabled them to create that piece of writing.
Primary School Character Education Leader 2

When our children do well, or demonstrate something that we believe is part of our 7 key principles, we award one of these [badge] and then on the back we'll have what kind of virtue or value it is that they've achieved.
Primary School Character Education Leader 3

Interestingly, only 44% of the primary and secondary schools surveyed had an explicit character education policy; however, 73% recorded having an explicit focus on character education within other school policies. This emphasised the notion of character education being viewed as a whole school approach. This was supported by the semi-structured interviews:

Our social inclusion team have developed our behaviour policy to a 'conduct policy' to think about everybody's conduct and character […] we have a restorative approach to it and we use the language of virtue.
Primary School Character Education Leader 2

4.1.2 Staff

4.1.2.1 The Role of Senior Leadership

Chart 1 shows that 92.3% of primary and secondary school teachers surveyed believed they were supported by the Senior Leadership Team in the teaching of character education. Of those teachers, 90.2% agreed or strongly agreed that the support provided by their school's Senior Leadership Team had a positive impact on their ability to develop their pupils' character. The importance of the Senior Leadership Team's role within character education was emphasised in all of the semi-structured interviews. Character education leaders explained their role in supporting staff so they feel comfortable and confident to teach character education, as well as highlighting the role of senior leaders in actively leading character education:

> I think that it always has to come from the top […] we often talk about bottom up […] but we also need to talk about leadership when we talk about vision.
> Primary School Character Education Leader 2

> I strongly feel that it is the role of the leadership team to set out what the vision of character education would be […] and to […] model and demonstrate that.
> Primary School Character Education Leader 4

['PEOPLE GROW THROUGH EXPERIENCE IF THEY MEET LIFE HONESTLY AND COURAGEOUSLY. THIS IS HOW CHARACTER IS BUILT.'

Eleanor Roosevelt]

Chart 1: Teacher Survey – Does your school's Senior Leadership Team provide support with your teaching of character education? (*n* = 477)

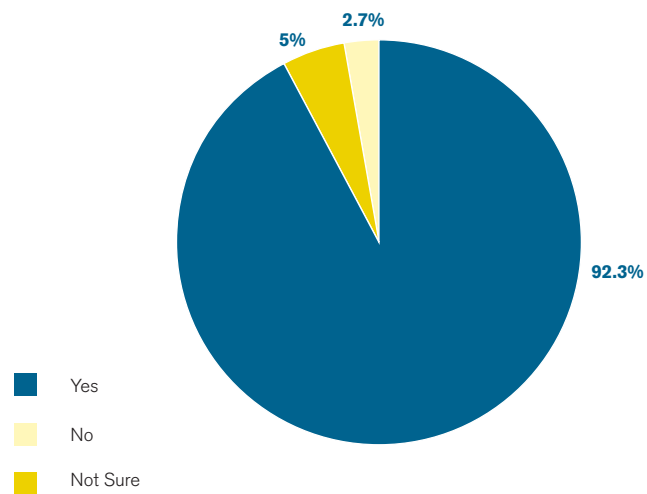- Yes — 92.3%
- No — 2.7%
- Not Sure — 5%

Chart 2: Teacher Survey – If yes, to what extent do you agree that the support provided by your school's Senior Leadership Team has a positive impact on your ability to develop your pupils' character? (*n* = 440)
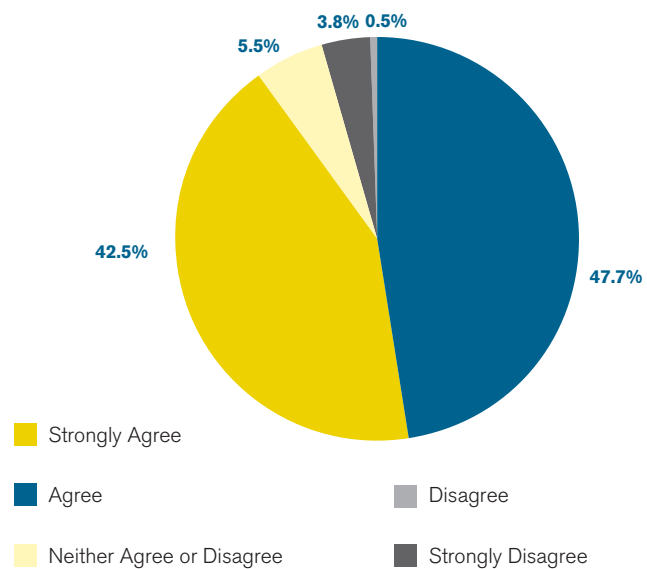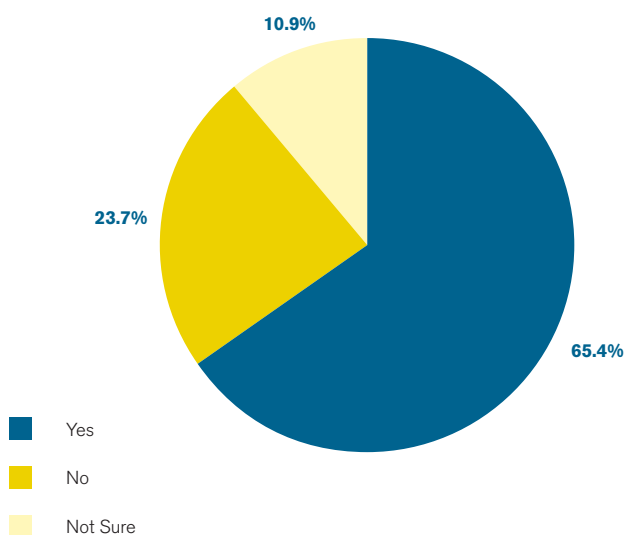
- Strongly Agree — 42.5%
- Agree — 47.7%
- Neither Agree or Disagree — 5.5%
- Disagree — 3.8%
- Strongly Disagree — 0.5%

Chart 3: Teacher Survey – In your current school, have you received explicit training in character education? (*n* = 477)

10.9%

23.7%

65.4%

■ Yes

■ No

■ Not Sure

Chart 4: Teacher Survey – To what extent do you agree that your explicit training in character education has had a positive impact on your ability to develop your pupils' character? (*n* = 312)

3.2% 5.4% 1%

35.3%

55.1%

■ Strongly Agree

■ Agree   ■ Disagree

■ Neither Agree or Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree

'WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME IS DEVELOPING A SET OF VALUES IN A YOUNG PERSON AND DEVELOPING A MORAL COMPASS.'
Secondary School Character Education Leader 3

4.1.2.2 Staff Training

Chart 3 shows that 65.4% of teachers from primary and secondary school settings had received explicit training in character education in their current school. When teachers were asked to what extent they agreed that their explicit training in character education had had a positive impact on their ability to develop their pupils' character, 90.4% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed (see Chart 4). Staff training was a prominent theme throughout the semi-structured interviews. Character education leaders described training on character education as being for all staff within a school, not just teaching staff. The importance of internal and external training opportunities was highlighted and character education leaders stressed any training provided should have a clear definition of character education. The character education leaders agreed that staff training enabled staff to be more confident in their delivery of character education:

[Staff training] builds their confidence so this creates the safe space where they are able to come to us and say, 'I'm not too sure about this topic, I don't feel confident in this.' So we deal with that and very carefully individualise that staff training.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 2
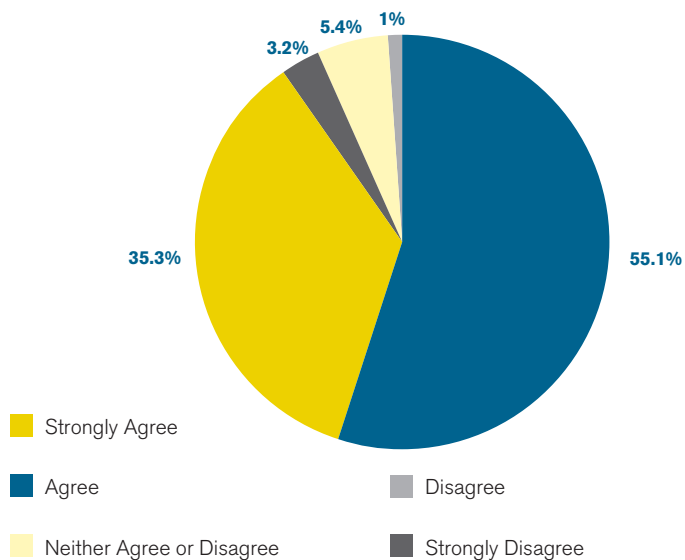
4.1.2.3 The Character Education Leader

Table 3 highlights the demographics of the character education leaders who completed the survey. These demographics outline some of the key characteristics of character education leaders from schools who have an embedded and intentional character education provision. The demographics show the role of a character education leader was most commonly held by an experienced teacher who was a member of the school's leadership team.

During the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders described their roles within school as: ensuring the school's mission statement was disseminated to all staff; planning for character education within the curriculum; providing meaningful CPD for staff around character education; and working closely with the Head Teacher to evaluate the school's character education provision.

4.1.2.4 Relationships

Chart 5 shows that primary and secondary school teachers perceived all relationships to have a strong positive impact on the development of pupils' character (ds = 1.20-1.95, ps <.001); and the relationship between pupils and staff was perceived to have a significantly greater impact on the development of pupils' character compared to the other relationship types. During the semi-structured interviews, all character education leaders emphasised the influence of positive relationships within their schools. When questioned further, all of the character education leaders highlighted the importance of relationships formed between schools and parents:

When we first introduced our respect curriculum, the parents, they were very much aware of the process as it was happening. Primary School Character Education Leader 5

Part of any good character programme is trying to work with the parents to teach them about the importance of character education. Secondary School Character Education Leader 3

Table 3: Character Education Leader Survey – Demographics of Respondents

	Gender		Average Age	Average Years as Teacher	Position within School		
	Male	Female			Senior Management	Mid-Management	Class Teacher
Primary (*n* = 20)	5	15	35.6	12.9	9	5	6
Secondary (*n* = 39)	21	18	42.1	17.4	28	11	0
Overall	26	33	40	15.9	37	16	6

Chart 5: Teacher Survey – Rate each of the relationships below from 1 to 7, with 7 having the most positive impact on the development of your pupils' character
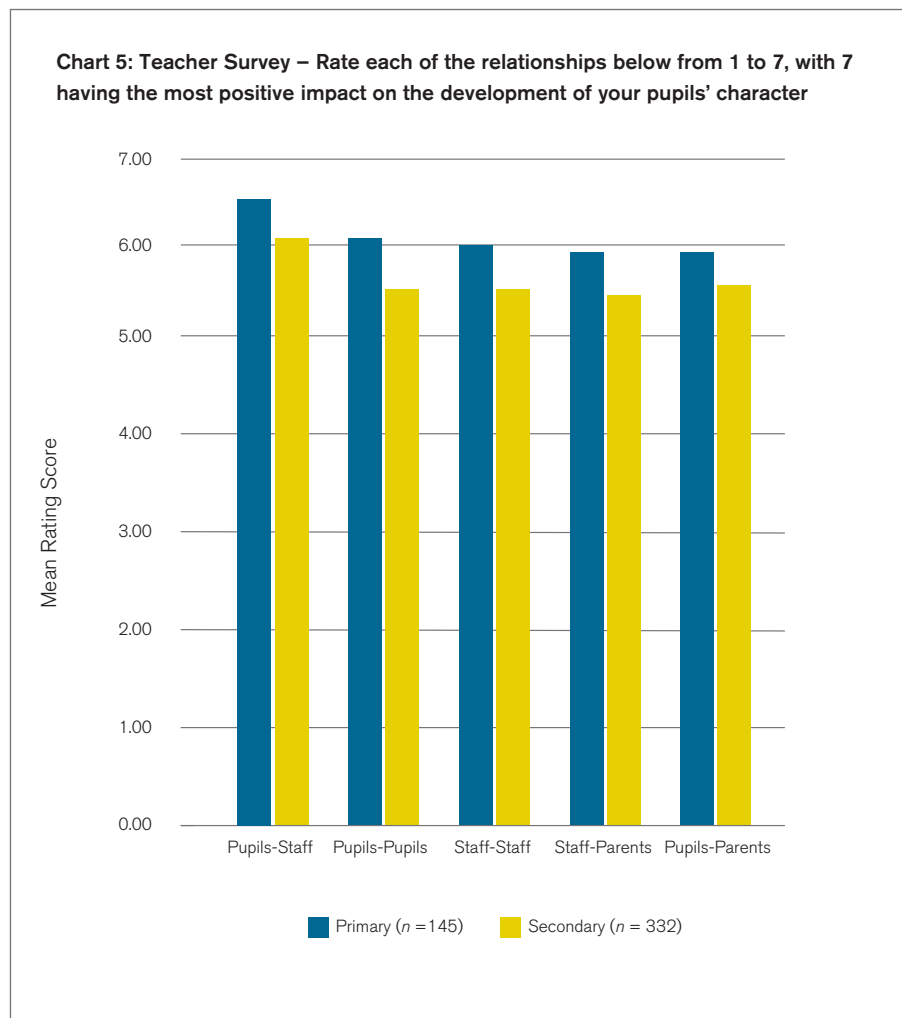
4.2 CHARACTER TAUGHT

4.2.1 The Curriculum

Table 4 and Charts 6, 7, 8 and 9 show the response when participants were asked whether their school used a specific character education teaching strategy, and, if so, to what extent they agreed that this strategy had had a positive impact on the development of their pupils' character. Participants' responses to the latter question were then converted into a Perceived Impact score (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) and a mean score was calculated from the participants who responded. Throughout this section, participants' responses have been separated into school settings: primary schools and secondary schools so that differences can be observed.

The findings in Table 4 demonstrate that schools who have an embedded and intentional character education provision use multiple strategies to teach character education throughout the curriculum. Out of the seven strategies surveyed, primary schools and secondary schools both used 5.2 strategies on average. Interestingly, the mean Perceived Impact score from all seven strategies was greater in primary schools (4.54; SD = .44) than in secondary schools (4.25; SD = .54) and could suggest that primary school character education leaders perceived teaching character through the curriculum to have had a greater impact on the development of their pupils' character.

The only strategy to be used by all schools was assemblies. Assemblies were also found to have had the largest mean Perceived Impact score in primary schools, and the second largest mean Perceived Impact score in secondary schools. During the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders explained how assemblies provided an opportunity to deliver a consistent message to a wider audience, this included: sharing the school's common language of character; delivering moral dilemmas; and sharing positive examples of character development from across the school. Assemblies also link explicitly to the use of inspirational speakers, which can be found within character sought.

Assemblies are another kind of opportunity where lots of very [...] positive messages around the school's values and supportive messages are given in a pastoral context.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 5

Table 4: Character Education Leader Survey - Character Taught: The Curriculum

Character Taught: The Curriculum	At your school, is character education explicitly taught through the following areas of the curriculum? [6]		Mean Perceived Impact Score (out of 5)	
	Primary (*n* = 20)	Secondary (*n* = 39)	Primary	Secondary
A discrete timetabled subject	12 (60%)	15 (38%)	4.67	4.20
Within existing subjects (excluding PSHE, Citizenship and RE)	19 (95%)	32 (82%)	4.53	4.25
Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (or equivalent)	19 (95%)	34 (87%)	4.47	4.32
Citizenship Education	11 (55%)	18 (46%)	4.55	4.11
Religious Education (or equivalent)	15 (75%)	25 (64%)	4.47	4.12
Form time	8 (40%)	38 (97%)	4.63	4.39
Assemblies	20 (100%)	39 (100%)	4.75	4.38

Certainly, our assemblies, our regular assemblies, are all built around character.
Primary School Character Education Leader 4

Interestingly, teaching character as a discrete timetabled subject was only used by 60% of primary schools and 38% of secondary schools. In contrast, teaching character within existing subjects was used by 95% of primary schools and 82% of secondary schools; and teaching character through PSHE was used by 95% of primary schools and 87% of secondary schools. This corroborates a previous finding from the character caught section of the survey, which emphasised that character education should be viewed as a whole school approach. When asked to comment on the most effective way of teaching character education through the curriculum, character education leaders also emphasised the influence of teaching character education across different subjects:

It has to weave into the curriculum, and we've seen so many more positive and powerful things that have happened since then.
Primary School Character Education Leader 2

Different subjects allow different opportunities in different ways and I think they are exploited in different contexts.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 5

Importantly, 97% of secondary schools reported that they used form time to teach character. For secondary character education leaders, form time had the greatest mean Perceived Impact score on pupils' character development. During the semi-structured interviews, secondary school character education leaders explained how form time provided a structured and formal space for daily interactions between pupils and tutors, where pupils can be explicitly introduced to character and virtue. One school described how the introduction of character-based moral dilemmas during form time had been successful:

We use the moral dilemmas in form time, in that really safe environment with the form tutor to talk through the virtues that [...] link to experiences that they may encounter in the real world.
Secondary School Character Education Leader 1

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[6] Participants who responded 'yes'

4.2.2 Teaching and Learning Strategies

The findings in Charts 6 and 7 illustrate that teachers who work in schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision use multiple teaching and learning strategies to teach character education. Out of the seven strategies surveyed, primary school teachers used 6.3 on average, and secondary school teachers used 5.2. The mean Perceived Impact score from all seven strategies was greater in primary schools (4.42; *SD* = .42) than in secondary schools (4.13; *SD* = .61), suggesting primary school teachers perceived the teaching and learning strategies in the survey to have had a greater impact on the development of their pupils' character (*d* = .52).

The two teaching and learning strategies which involved working closely with peers – discussion-based learning and co-operative learning – were the top two strategies for the mean Perceived Impact score in both primary and secondary school settings. This suggests that teachers perceived character education to have had the greatest impact when taught in group situations, where pupils can question and learn from others. During the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders stressed the importance of designating time for pupils to interact with peers. Within these interactions, character education leaders pinpointed the need for pupils to learn to disagree in respectful ways:

> *Actively listening to each other, listening to your teacher, listening to fellow students, valuing each other's input, being able to disagree with each other and that's fine – you can disagree but do it in a nice, civil manner.* Secondary School Character Education Leader 3

> *It's about allowing the opportunity within the classroom for conversation and discussions.* Primary School Character Education Leader 5

It was noticeable from the findings that virtue literacy was the least used teaching and learning strategy by teachers in primary and secondary schools. From the semi-structured interviews, what became evident to the research team was that schools *were* using virtue literacy as a teaching and learning strategy but were not aware of it. Several character education leaders discussed the importance of a shared language of character, and the importance of staff and pupils developing a knowledge and understanding of character and virtues. No character education leader explicitly mentioned the term 'virtue literacy' during the semi-structured interviews; however, the descriptions given by character education leaders included the key components of virtue literacy (see Jubilee Centre, 2017: 8).

Chart 6: Teacher Survey – Do you use this teaching and learning strategy for teaching character education in and out of the classroom?

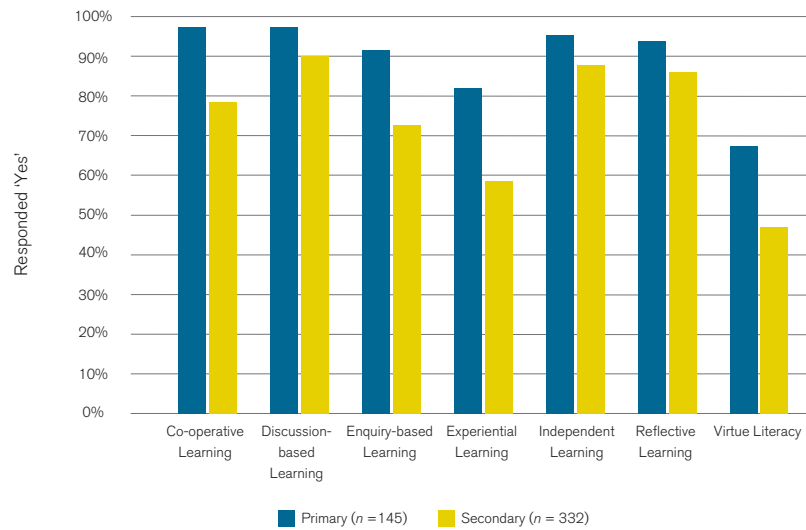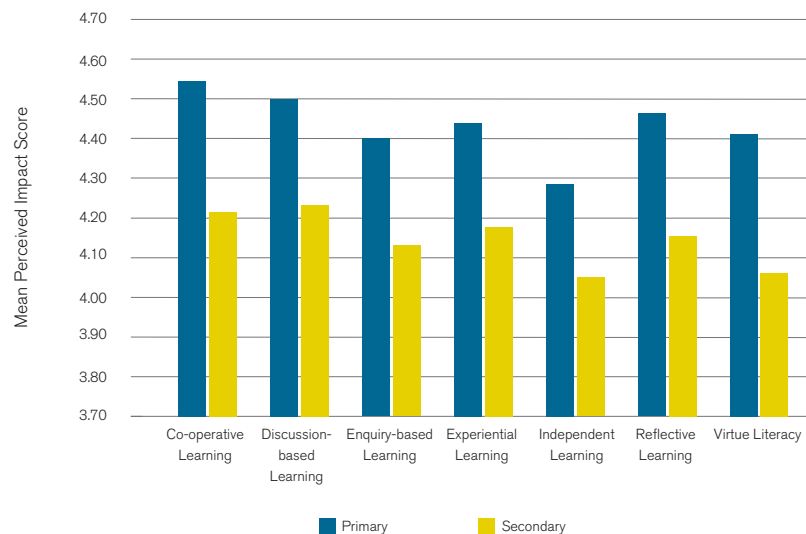Legend: Primary (*n* = 145), Secondary (*n* = 332)

Chart 7: Teacher Survey – Mean Perceived Impact score of the teaching and learning strategy on the character development of pupils

Legend: Primary, Secondary

> 'IT'S OUR MORAL DUTY TO HELP STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT CHARACTER.'
> **Secondary School Character Education Leader 2**

4.2.3 Activities and Resources

The findings in Charts 8 and 9 demonstrate that teachers who work in schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision use multiple activities and resources to teach character education. Out of the 12 strategies surveyed, primary school teachers used 8.8 on average and secondary school teachers used 7.1. Of interest was that the mean Perceived Impact score from across all 12 strategies was slightly greater ($d = .27$) in primary schools (4.32; $SD = .57$) than in secondary schools (4.17; $SD = .55$) suggesting that primary school teachers perceived the activities and resources in the survey to have had a greater impact on the development of their pupils' character.

When looking at individual activities and resources, it was interesting that moral dilemmas was the only one to appear in the top five strategies used and the top five mean Perceived Impact scores for both primary and secondary school settings. During the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders reported that moral dilemmas provided an opportunity for sensitive subjects to be discussed. From the semi-structured interviews, the research team also noted that moral dilemmas were considered to be linked to other character education taught strategies, most notably moral exemplars, drama, and stories, whilst also being used across the curriculum in assemblies, form time, and existing subjects:

> I know for us moral dilemmas are a great way, it forms so many brilliant discussions that come out particularly on sensitive subjects and our students absolutely love to talk about them.
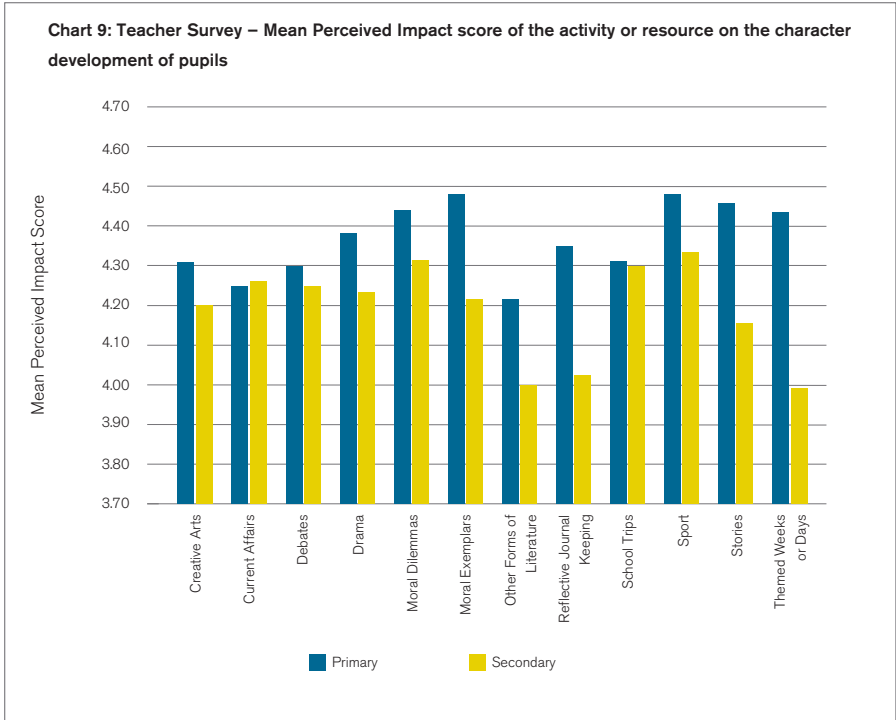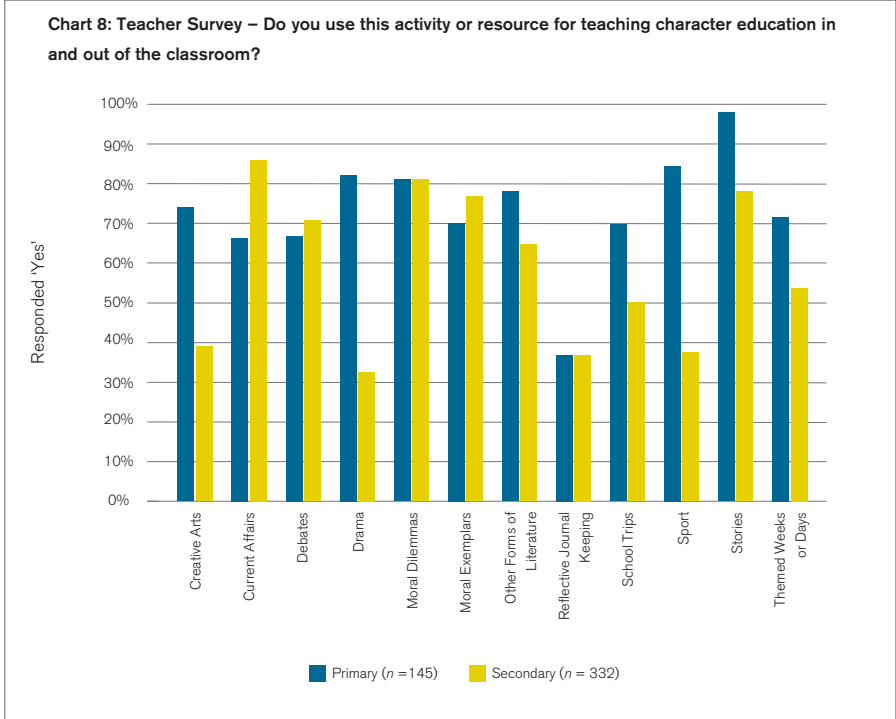> Secondary School Character Education Leader 2

> It's amazing when you give them a moral dilemma, they can answer and give you a resolution to that so quickly, but then it's that reflection.
> Primary School Character Education Leader 5

In primary schools, 98% of teachers reported using stories to teach character, in contrast to 78% of secondary school teachers. During the semi-structured interviews, nine character education leaders emphasised stories as an effective way of teaching character education. Character education leaders also highlighted the 'empowering' nature of stories and provided examples from across the curriculum of how their school used stories to develop character.

Interestingly, teachers recorded sport as having the highest mean Perceived Impact score in both primary and secondary schools. In primary schools, 84% of primary teachers reported using sport to develop the character of their pupils, yet only 38% of secondary school teachers reported using sport. Four of the ten character education leaders mentioned sport during the semi-structured interviews, focussing on sports' potential to develop pupil leadership and discussing the inclusion of sport in extra-curricular activities (a strategy included within character sought).

Chart 8: Teacher Survey – Do you use this activity or resource for teaching character education in and out of the classroom?

Chart 9: Teacher Survey – Mean Perceived Impact score of the activity or resource on the character development of pupils

'CHARACTER EDUCATION IS REALLY, FOR US, THE FOUNDATIONS OF EVERYTHING ELSE THAT WE DO.'
Primary School Character Education Leader 2

4.3 CHARACTER SOUGHT

4.3.1 Enrichment

Findings from the character education leader survey which relate to enrichment activities can be seen in Table 5. Participants were asked if their school used the enrichment activity, and if yes, to what extent they agreed that this activity had had a positive impact on the development of their pupils' character. Participants' responses to the latter question were then converted into a Perceived Impact score (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree or disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) and a mean score was taken from the participants who responded. The participants' responses have been separated into school settings: primary schools (n = 20) and secondary schools (n = 39) so that differences can be observed.

The findings in Table 5 demonstrate that schools who have an embedded and intentional character education provision use multiple enrichment activities to develop character. Out of the eight strategies surveyed, primary schools used 5.9 on average and secondary schools used 5.6. Interestingly, the mean Perceived Impact score from all eight strategies was similar in primary schools (4.54; SD = .39) and secondary schools (4.37; SD = .51).

Of interest to the research team was that pupil leadership was the joint most used enrichment activity by primary schools and the most used by secondary schools. Pupil leadership was also in the top three strategies for mean Perceived Impact score in both school settings. During the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders explained the positive impact that pupil leadership had on individual pupils. Character education leaders reported how pupil leadership was most impactful when it: spanned across year groups; was voluntary; and was seen as a way for pupils to role model good character to their peers.

> *We have a range of leadership things that go on […] we have playground leaders, sports leaders, we have our agents of change and then we have special agents that lead the way.*
> Primary School Character Education Leader 4

> *We have a huge amount of student leadership opportunities in the school which again are also very powerful and important in terms of learning character.*
> Secondary School Character Education Leader 5

Traditionally, schools associate enrichment with extra-curricular activities, so it did not surprise

Table 5: Character Education Leader Survey - Character Sought: Enrichment

Character Sought: Enrichment	Does your school offer the following enrichment activity with a character focus? [7]		Mean Perceived Impact Score (out of 5)	
	Primary (n = 20)	Secondary (n = 39)	Primary	Secondary
Extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports, creative arts, music)	18 (90%)	33 (85%)	4.56	4.52
Clubs and activities delivered by external facilitators	16 (80%)	22 (56%)	4.38	4.23
Pupil leadership	18 (90%)	35 (90%)	4.67	4.60
Organised school events (e.g. drama productions, school fete)	17 (85%)	27 (69%)	4.35	4.44
Residential trips	16 (80%)	27 (69%)	4.69	4.52
Inspirational speakers	16 (80%)	27 (69%)	4.75	4.19
Work experience or apprenticeships	6 (30%)	20 (51%)	4.50	4.30
Social action and volunteering	11 (55%)	29 (74%)	4.64	4.48

the research team to find that extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports, creative arts, music) were the joint most used enrichment activity for primary schools and the second most used for secondary schools. Extra-curricular activities were also a prominent theme throughout the semi-structured interviews. Character education leaders explained that, for extra-curricular activities to contribute towards character education, they need to be: included within the normal school day; span across year groups; have a clear character education purpose; and include varied and inclusive activities.

> *Every department has to put on at least one enrichment […] it is not putting a club on to tick a box […] there's got to be some value and the kids have got to understand when they go along to that club […] what part of their character are they developing.*
> Secondary School Character Education Leader 3

> *The two hours of enrichment that everybody takes part in is built into the school day. I'd worked in schools that had won awards for extra-curricular provision, but it wasn't always inclusive.*
> Secondary School Character Education Leader 4

It was of interest to the research team that primary and secondary schools perceived residential trips to have had the second greatest impact on the character development of their pupils. Residential trips include pupils engaging with activities outside of the normal school setting and include experiences to which pupils would not commonly be exposed. Links can be found between this strategy and the teaching and learning strategies of experiential learning, enquiry-based learning, and co-operative learning, which were also perceived to impact positively upon pupils' character development.

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[7]   Participants who responded 'yes'

5 Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

There is no 'blueprint' for developing character within and across the curriculum and no 'one-size-fits-all' whole school approach which will work in every context, in every school, and for all pupils (Watts, Fullard and Peterson, 2021). However, the findings from this research report and the development of *The Character Teaching Inventory* provide schools with a range of teaching strategies which have been used in schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision.

This section discusses the most important findings from the study in light of the research questions raised in section 1 and aims to support schools in developing a whole school character education approach.

5.1 MULTIPLE STRATEGIES FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION

This report shows that teachers and schools use multiple character education teaching strategies, spanning character caught, taught, and sought.

The participants within this study all worked in schools with an embedded and intentional character education provision; therefore, the multiple character education strategies used by these schools had been carefully planned for and implemented over an extended period of time. Consequently, it is not recommended that a school or teacher begin a character education journey by immediately introducing multiple character education strategies. Rather, school leaders need to carefully select which character education strategies are best suited to their school community. On the basis of the findings from this report, it is recommended that an initial focus be placed upon the development of a school's vision, ethos, and culture (see section 5.3).

As a school develops its character education provision, it is recommended that character education leaders and teachers make themselves aware of multiple teaching strategies. With this in mind, 70 character education teaching strategies were included within *The Character Teaching Inventory*, spanning character caught, taught, and sought.

5.2 CHARACTER CAUGHT, TAUGHT, AND SOUGHT: INTERLINKED AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE

Since the publication of *A Framework for Character Education in Schools* (2017), character caught, taught, and sought have been an effective way of introducing character education to teachers and schools.

The review of the Centre's research and teaching resources, conducted at the beginning of this project, and the findings from this study, highlighted the need to view the three categories as mutually supportive of each other. Though described as separate categories, each with its own definition, character caught, taught, and sought are interlinked and work simultaneously as part of a school's character education provision. For example, stories were shown to be the most common resource for teaching character education in primary schools; however, when using stories to teach character education, other taught strategies such as drama, moral dilemmas, or moral exemplars can be used in tandem. Multiple teaching and learning strategies may also be used alongside stories; for example, when a protagonist's actions and motivations are explored, discussion-based learning and reflective learning will likely take place. Character caught strategies may be incorporated when using stories, with discussions centred on explicit references to the school's set of priority virtues. When choosing to undertake pupil leadership activities (the most used character sought strategy in secondary schools), pupils actively seek to develop their own character; but they will also have numerous opportunities for character caught through interactions with teachers and peers.

Considering this finding, *The Character Teaching Inventory* is presented as three categories – character caught, taught, and sought. However, it is made clear within the Inventory that each strategy cannot be viewed in isolation. As demonstrated above, on most occasions, each teaching strategy works in tandem with others. In some cases, it may be argued that specific teaching strategies span the three categories, highlighting how character caught, taught, and sought can be viewed as interlinked and

mutually supportive of each other. Therefore, when a school is planning their character education provision, the teaching strategies listed within all three categories of the Inventory need to be included and careful consideration given to how they mutually support each other.

5.3 CHARACTER CAUGHT: VISION, ETHOS, AND CULTURE

The findings within this report emphasise that character caught strategies are particularly important when developing a whole school vision, ethos, and culture. The character education leader survey highlighted three character caught strategies: a set of priority virtues, a mission statement which explicitly references character, and a whole school shared language of character – which were most commonly used by schools and were perceived to have had the greatest impact on a school's character education provision. These findings were also supported by the semi-structured interviews where the research team were able to explore these strategies in more detail.

5.3.1 A Set of Priority Virtues
Character education leaders explained the importance of starting a character education journey by selecting a set of priority virtues for staff and pupils to aspire towards. Character education leaders discussed the most effective way to select a set of priority virtues and believed that it was to involve the whole school community including staff, pupils, parents, governors and – where possible – the local community. For the schools included in this study, asking a wide range of people for their opinions resulted in the selection of priority virtues which truly reflected the beliefs and views of the entire school community. Selecting a set of priority virtues can be seen as an important first step as, once selected, these virtues can be used to inform a range of whole school practices and initiatives including: a mission statement, policies and strategies, a shared language of character, and how character is taught through the curriculum.

5.3.2 A Mission Statement which Explicitly References Character

A carefully planned school mission statement, that describes the type of person a school wants to develop, can strengthen a school's focus on the character development of its pupils. Character education leaders made links between their mission statement and their set of priority virtues; outlining a mission statement's importance in the initial stages of the development of a positive school vision, ethos, and culture.

5.3.3 A Whole School Shared Language of Character

During the semi-structured interviews, character education leaders explained how a whole school shared language of character is influenced by a school's priority virtues and mission statement and can be embedded through a range of strategies, including assemblies, the curriculum, and the consistent use of vocabulary by teachers. Developing a shared language of character enables consistent communication and reflection on character education, positively impacting upon pupils' character development. Schools must be aware that the development of a shared language of character takes time and should be considered a long-term aim. The impact of a shared language of character spans across character caught, taught, and sought, and therefore, can be viewed as significant when developing a positive vision, ethos, and culture.

5.4 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Much like any other whole school initiative, the provision for character education requires engagement from a school's Senior Leadership Team. The teacher survey demonstrated that a school's Senior Leadership Team can have a positive impact on teachers, most notably by supporting teachers in how to teach character education and by providing CPD opportunities for teachers relating to character education. Throughout the semi-structured interviews, all character education leaders emphasised the importance of school leadership in establishing a clear strategic approach to character education. This included: incorporating character education into school development plans; encouraging the inclusion of character education through the curriculum; and regularly monitoring and evaluating the school's character education provision. Ultimately, it is a prerequisite that the Senior Leadership Team are the driving force behind a school's character education provision by being exemplars of the school's priority virtues, and by demonstrating courageous leadership that prioritises character development.

Interestingly, during the semi-structured interviews, eight of the character education leaders reflected on the importance of their appointments, and the significant role a character education leader holds in a school with an embedded and intentional character education provision. From the character education leader survey demographics, it is apparent that the majority of character education leaders were a member of the school's leadership team. All of the character education leaders interviewed demonstrated a passion and commitment to character education and this stood out to the researchers as being a contributing factor to the success of the school's character education provision. When embarking on a character education journey, it is important the Senior Leadership Team appoint the most appropriate member of staff to lead character education, someone with experience and passion who can demonstrate this in their beliefs and actions.

To reflect the importance of school leadership, *The Character Teaching Inventory* provides four strategies intended for the Senior Leadership Team to implement: to drive and maintain character education; to appoint a character lead; co-ordinate staff training; and evaluate provision of character education.

5.5 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS DIFFERENCES

The findings from across the character education leader survey and the teacher survey revealed that primary schools used more character education teaching strategies than secondary schools. It was also found that primary school character education leaders and primary school teachers perceived the impact of taught strategies for character education to have been greater on the development of their pupils' character.

This may be explained by the different nature of primary and secondary schools. In primary school settings, pupils are younger (5-11 years) and generally spend most of their school day with the same teacher and within the same class of peers. Whereas in secondary school settings, pupils are older (11-16 years), usually have several teachers throughout a school day, and may be with different peers for specific lessons. A pupil and teacher may only be together for one or two lessons a week. A primary school teacher will likely interact with the same 30 pupils every day, whilst a secondary school teacher may interact with over 200 pupils in any given week. The importance of staff-pupil relationships was corroborated by this study, where primary and secondary teachers perceived this type of relationship to have had the greatest impact on the character development of pupils. Hence, if staff-pupil relationships are perceived to have had the greatest impact on pupils' character development, then primary school teachers may have a greater opportunity to develop their pupils' character as they spend significantly more time with them. The findings can be interpreted as demonstrating the importance of character education with children in primary school settings.

6 The Character Teaching Inventory

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The Character Teaching Inventory was based on a review of the Jubilee Centre's teaching resources and research data, alongside the empirical findings from surveys and interviews conducted with character education leaders and teachers. The Inventory presents a comprehensive overview of 70 character education teaching strategies for schools to implement as part of their character education provision. It is intended both for schools who have already begun their character education journey, and for those about to begin. The aim of the Inventory is to make more explicit the implicit aspects of character education, which are often already present in most schools, whilst also providing suggestions of new strategies for schools. The Inventory has been designed as a practical tool to accompany *A Framework for Character Education in Schools* (2017).

The strategies listed within *The Character Teaching Inventory* are most effective when initiated and implemented intentionally by school leaders. When carefully planned and organised, character education should purposely foster the development of pupils' character. Taking such an approach allows schools to dedicate time and space for structured character education opportunities. The aim of the Inventory is to illustrate how character education can become an intentional, meaningful, and reflective part of whole school practice.

6.2 HOW THE CATEGORIES LINK

The Character Teaching Inventory is presented as three categories: character caught, taught, and sought. It is important to recognise at the outset that all three categories are interlinked, with character often being caught, taught, and sought simultaneously. Each category contains multiple teaching strategies which support character education in the classroom, the school, and beyond. Whilst each strategy is presented within a specific category, each one is not category-specific and has been collated as a best fit model. Therefore, when a school is planning their character education provision, the strategies listed within all three categories should be considered.

Character education teaching strategies include:
- a school culture, driven by school leaders, that enables pupils to build and develop positive relationships, facilitating and nurturing good character;
- a range of learning opportunities, using the recommended activities, resources, and varying teaching strategies, encouraging the development of pupils' character both in and out of the classroom; and
- virtue-forming shared experiences which create a communal sense of character development, placing pupils within a community context to practise good character.

'I HOPE WE HAVE CREATED A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT WHERE CHILDREN THRIVE.'
Primary School Character Education Leader 4

6.3 THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERS

School leaders are usually identified as the members of staff who make up a Senior Leadership Team, including a Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teachers, and Assistant Head Teachers. This team are responsible for driving and maintaining educational initiatives within a school, including those related to character education. However, every member of staff can show leadership, particularly with regards to the character education of the pupils they teach.

Suggestions for how school leaders can use *The Character Teaching Inventory* include the following:
- To reflect upon current character education provision.
- To design and implement an explicit approach for character education.
- To share the school's character education approach with the whole school community, including pupils, parents, and governors.
- To enhance existing strategies to teaching, evaluation, and feedback as it relates to character education.

When using *The Character Teaching Inventory*, school leaders are encouraged to develop their own character education provision that best fits the needs of their school community.

The Character Teaching Inventory that follows provides a concise description of each teaching strategy. An extended online version, which provides detailed definitions of each strategy, alongside practical examples, related resources, and further reading, can be accessed on the Centre's website using the following link:
www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/TheCharacterTeachingInventory

'IT'S ABOUT ENABLING THEM TO FEEL THEY CAN SHAPE THEMSELVES...AND LIVE A PURPOSEFUL LIFE.'
Secondary School Character Education Leader 4

Character Caught

> CHARACTER CAN BE
> CAUGHT THROUGH
> A POSITIVE SCHOOL
> COMMUNITY,
> FORMATIONAL
> RELATIONSHIPS
> AND A CLEAR ETHOS

ENVIRONMENT

School settings which contribute to character education

- A cared for, safe, and well-designed **physical environment** promotes a sense of belonging
- A collaborative, supportive, and aspirational **learning environment** strikes a balance between academic progress and character development
- A positive **spiritual, moral, social, and cultural environment** encourages staff and pupils to root their character development in their personal beliefs and world views

VISION, ETHOS, CULTURE

Practices and initiatives which enable a school to shape a distinctive approach towards character education

School Leaders:
- Invite the school community to select and define **priority virtues** for all to aspire towards
- Develop a **mission statement** which affirms these priority virtues
- Develop a whole school **shared language of character**, encouraging consistent communication and reflection
- Integrate character education into existing **school policies and strategic plans**
- Create a **character education policy**
- Establish clear **ethical and moral expectations** for staff and pupils, informed by the priority virtues and mission statement
- Ensure **equality and inclusion** to demonstrate a commitment to character education for all

- Include character considerations when **recruiting staff**
- **Induct new staff** so that each individual understands their role as a character educator
- **Recognise and celebrate** examples of good character

RELATIONSHIPS

Positive relationships, facilitated by school leaders, which support character education

Pupils:
- Form meaningful and respectful relationships with staff
- Develop positive relationships between peers, prioritising compassion, friendship, and trust

Staff:
- Develop compassionate and supportive relationships where pupils feel valued
- Form trusting and respectful relationships with colleagues, to motivate and support each other
- Form collaborative and supportive relationships with parents through positive communication

Wider School:
- Engage families of all pupils to involve them in the life of the school
- Participate in activities alongside the local community, reinforcing a sense of belonging and responsible citizenship
- Establish partnerships with educational institutions, including other schools and universities

STAFF

The roles of staff in supporting character education

All Staff:
- Recognise their role as **moral exemplars**, consistently setting a positive example through their own character
- **Understand and support** the school's character education approach

Teachers:
- Acknowledge their influence as **character educators**, facilitating character education in their classroom and beyond
- Engage in internal and external **professional development** on character education, identifying improvements for practice
- Support pupils through **pastoral care and mentoring**, offering pupils guidance on their character development
- Utilise **research** in the field to evaluate and improve their practice

Senior Leadership Team:
- **Drive and maintain** a whole school character education approach, providing support for staff and pupils
- Appoint, train, and support a **character lead**
- Co-ordinate **internal and external training**, empowering staff in their role as character educators
- Use appropriate methods to **evaluate provision** of character education

Governers:
- **Support and challenge** character education provision

Character Taught

CHARACTER EDUCATION CAN BE TAUGHT THROUGH THE CURRICULUM USING TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES, ACTIVITIES, AND RESOURCES

THE CURRICULUM
Approaches to teach character education through a school's formal curriculum

Character education can be taught through:

- A **discrete and bespoke timetabled subject**, focussing explicitly on the teaching of character and virtue
- **Existing subjects,** identifying opportunities to include character and virtue within the curriculum
- **Personal, Social, Health, and Economic education** (or equivalent), using an issues or topic-based approach to teach character and virtue
- **Citizenship Education,** developing the character and virtues needed to be an active and responsible citizen
- **Religious Education,** using personal beliefs and world views to explore character and virtue
- **Form time,** providing a daily platform to discuss character and virtue
- **Assemblies,** bringing the whole school community together to explore character and virtue through a shared language

TEACHING AND LEARNING
Strategies used for teaching character education in and out of the classroom

- **Discussion-based learning** engages pupils with moral and ethical issues through teacher-guided and pupil-led interactions
- **Independent learning** encourages pupils to think critically and take responsibility for their own character development
- **Reflective learning** guides pupils to consider their character through critical reflection
- **Co-operative learning** involves pupils working together, encouraging teamwork and communication
- **Enquiry-based learning** encourages curiosity, challenging pupils to ask and answer open-ended questions
- **Experiential learning** offers pupils opportunities to be active learners through a range of virtue-forming experiences
- **Virtue literacy** develops virtue perception, virtue knowledge and understanding, and virtue reasoning

ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES
Examples of teaching aids which can be used as the focus for character education

Character education can be taught using:

- **Stories**, focussing on moral and ethical complexities
- **Moral dilemmas**, encouraging pupils to discuss and reflect on situations requiring an ethical response
- **Current affairs**, reflecting on the presence or absence of virtue in news stories
- **Moral exemplars**, inspiring pupils to live virtuously
- **Debates**, discussing key moral and ethical issues
- **Literature**, including poetry and historical narratives
- **Themed days or weeks**, focussing explicitly on character and virtues
- **School trips**, encouraging pupils to engage with a range of people and places
- **Sport,** developing character through team and individual activity
- **Creative arts**, including music and the visual arts
- **Drama**, encouraging pupils to understand the perspective of others
- **Reflective journal keeping**, focussed on the personal character development of pupils

Character Sought

[
CHARACTER CAN BE
SOUGHT THROUGH
CHOSEN EXPERIENCES
THAT OCCUR WITHIN
AND OUTSIDE OF THE
FORMAL CURRICULUM
]

ENRICHMENT

Experiences during and outside the school day that broaden pupils' passions and interests

School Leaders:

- Offer opportunities for **pupil leadership**
- Establish thriving **extra-curricular activities,** enabling all pupils to have access to a wide range of virtue-forming experiences
- Plan **organised school events** that allow pupils to demonstrate their character
- Organise **residential trips** that provide challenging experiences in new environments

- Invite a range of **inspirational speakers** into school to motivate pupils' character development
- Encourage external facilitators to recognise opportunities for character education in their **clubs and activities**
- Encourage pupils to engage with work **experiences or apprenticeships** as preparation for future employment

SOCIAL ACTION AND VOLUNTEERING

Community-based experiences which encourage civic engagement in school and beyond

School Leaders:

- Offer **school-led social action** experiences that promote social awareness, enabling pupils to make a positive difference to their community and themselves
- Promote **community-led social action** exierences, encouraging pupils to independently participate
- Encourage pupils to make a commitment to purposeful **voluntary activity** in and out of school

- **Recognise and celebrate** pupils' participation in social action and volunteering
- Enable pupils to explore their role as **active citizens** within their school, the community, and globally

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Acknowledgements

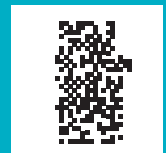# JOHN TEMPLETON
FOUNDATION

This project was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation

For more information about the
Teaching Character Education: What Works
project and the Jubilee Centre for
Character and Virtues please contact:
tel: 0121 414 4875
email: jubileecentre@contacts.bham.ac.uk
www.jubileecentre.ac.uk
ISBN: 9780704429765

Designed and printed by

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