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Building character at school and tackling the opportunity gap

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- They don't see character building as a core part of their schools' strategies
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➤ What teachers want: recommendations

- Give students and teachers a say in shaping the approach
- Create a CPD programme to share latest research on how character develops
- Create character building resources and lesson plans, in collaboration with teachers
- Extend the early years foundation stage approach beyond Reception class
- Include an assessment of character in Ofsted regulation
- Expand the provision of extracurricular activities
- Focus on reducing the opportunity gap
- Increase sharing between public and state schools
- Generate learning and evidence for character

Character and social mobility

Character capabilities – like application to task, emotional self-regulation, and agency – help young people overcome adversity and disadvantage. Life chances depend not only on life circumstances, but also on particular personal qualities: the ability to stick with a task, even when it becomes onerous; to stand by a relationship, even when it is hard; to empathise with others, even when they are difficult or very different to you; to use willpower to defer gratification, and invest in your future.

Importantly, different character capabilities may be relevant for achieving upward social mobility than may be relevant for achieving other ends – greater harmony in personal and social relationships, for example. Climbing up the economic ladder might require an emphasis on self-belief and ambition; building a life partnership with someone would comparatively require added doses of empathy, a strong ability to listen, and an ability to respond to difficulties with understanding, love, and perhaps also humour. So we require different character traits for different parts of life. But at the same time, both endeavors require much of the same – commitment, hard work, resilience in the face of setbacks, and some level of self-esteem and confidence.

The UK has low rates of upward economic mobility, especially from the bottom rung of the ladder. In part, this is because people born into poor families and communities are less likely to develop character traits needed to get on in life. This is not a moral judgment. It is an empirical one.

In *How Children Succeed*, journalist Paul Tough vividly documents how financial insecurity, stressful daily lives, unstable family backgrounds, patchy parenting and negative peer pressure create difficult conditions for development of the skills and habits that stand people in good stead for future success. This is one of the reasons why poverty is inherited, and mobility is constrained.

In 2011, David Cameron hailed the evidence showing the role of character in social mobility as “one of the most important findings in a generation for those who care about fairness and inequality” and “the new law for social mobility”.

While traditionally concerns about character have often been focused on *order*: reducing crime, delinquency, drugs and incivility, today there is growing recognition that character also matters for *opportunity*. Character counts for social stability, but it counts for social mobility too.

The home front and the foundations of character

Long before arriving at the school gates, there is a sizeable gap in cognitive abilities between richer and poorer children. A lot of this is down to differences in parenting and home environment.

For example, children of affluent parents have heard on average 33 million words spoken by the time they start school. This is three times as many as those from poor backgrounds. They will also have heard many thousands more positive comments. And while half of all parents read to their children every day, one in four never read to their children, or no more frequently than once every six months. Almost every child in poorer neighborhoods have a TV in their bedroom: just half of children in middle-class families do.

Crucially, it's not just in cognitive skills, like reading, writing and numbers, where the parenting gap shows up, but also in the development of vital 'character capabilities' such as empathy, application and resilience. Inequality in the quality of families, and specifically in the quality of parenting, is a large contributor to inequalities of opportunity, and therefore in income and wealth.

The family gap creates an opportunity gap. School, a great equalizer in our society, is therefore a crucial place to redress the opportunity gap. Teachers, then, play a primary role in not only imparting knowledge, but also in helping their students to develop their characters.

The horse's mouth: what teachers think about their role as character builders

The content in this paper is based on a series of workshops held for primary and secondary school teachers as part of their Continuing Professional Development. The teachers who took part in the discussion are in their second year so are relatively new to the teaching profession. The teachers were shown an overview of the academic evidence on soft skills development as well as evidence showing the role of soft skills in shaping a range of life chances from future earnings to relationship stability, and also to educational attainment.

Basic questions were posed to the teachers to develop discussion, but the majority of the hour long sessions were based on self-directed conversations with minimum facilitation.

Introductory questions asked were:

- (How) is character being taught in British schools today?
- What are the key barriers and challenges to building character at school?
- What are some recommendations and suggestions for teachers, senior staff and policy makers to make it easier?

Key messages from teachers:

Teachers see character building as a core part of their role

Teachers immediately identified with their role of builders of character as well as teachers of knowledge and cognitive skills. The idea that school was a place for character development resonated with them:

It sounds like common sense. When you hear it's important – character, resilience – you just think 'well obviously it's important'.

Teachers saw their role as character builders both instrumentally – to support children to get better grades – but also as an end in itself – to help children flourish and fulfil their potential. They were keenly aware that character underpins educational success:

So many kids that you... know have the academic ability... just won't sit down and do work if you're not standing there saying 'do this work', 'keep doing this work'. Then at home they'll turn on their xbox and play that until three in the morning and then they'll come into school really tired the next day...it leads to bad grades on coursework, bad grades on exams. And it's all rolling out of the fact that they don't have the..i don't know if it's resilience, or if it's focus..gumption! they don't have the gumption..ha, yeah.

They see important differences in 'character' amongst higher achieving and lower achieving students

Teachers highlighted that not all character 'deficits' were simply aligned to deficits in academic attainment. They particularly noted how high achievers often struggle with an inability to face challenge, to bounce back from set backs, and to cope with failure, whereas some lower achieving students were much more used to asking questions, and persevering through difficulties:

What I do find the most is with lower set kids, teachers are traditionally like 'Oh, don't worry about them like they're not really as important, just do whatever you want with them'. [But] they have the most amazing characters and [you have time to] build these characters. And it's the opposite of what everyone says because you have time with them to do group work, to be like let's forget the curriculum let's have a whole lesson on communicating with each other and listening rather than ticking boxes for the curriculum. So I find that with my lower set classes I'm able to actually do character-building exercises whereas my higher set classes have no idea how to talk to each other...my focus is entirely on getting them through the curriculum so they get a B or an A.

Something I've found with the 'less able' is that they do actually have more independence and more resilience. The higher set, when given something challenging, have not yet learned the skills of how to persevere with something, how to work something out, whereas the kids with lower middle and low can actually progress a lot more because they're not scared of not being able to do it. [It's normal for them to find] something hard.

They see character as the hidden ingredient that helps some kids to 'buck the trend'

Character was seen as hidden source of academic mobility at school, helping some kids to reach and exceed expectations. One teacher spoke of predictive data from a service from the Fischer Family Trust and how character and soft skills development was a key confounding factor in a pupil's predicted attainment and whether they actually achieved, or over-achieved in reality:

I teach a bit higher, like key stage 4 and sixth form. And I teach the middle sets. I [have been surprised by] their FFT data which predicts what grade they should get, so their natural intelligence. I often see a disparity between kids with good soft skills development outperforming their predicted grades, whereas those [with less developed soft skills] with a potentially high predicted grade would actually get lower.

With middle ability kids, soft skills have a huge impact over time on whether they make the grade and progress.

They see that low achievement is often connected to self-esteem and difficult home environments.

Amongst the teachers in the CPD workshops were some other community professionals. In particular, a number of social workers and public health professionals were present in the sessions. One social worker had particularly insightful views on the relationship between educational attainment, soft skills development, and parenting and home environment:

As a social worker for me I work with a lot of kids from school, and do a lot of talking about how they feel about themselves and that often leads to me learning about problems at home...often when I ask children what they're good at they can't answer with anything, they have such low self-esteem. It stems from the home, they've not got parents encouraging them the way that high achieving kids would have. Particularly for parents that have children with learning difficulties they can struggle to identify when their kids actually are doing well. It just has such a dramatic impact on the kids. Schools should be helping kids identify what they're good at because that will help them make their plans for further education. It's not just about academic grades, but they think that it is only about GCSEs and if they can't get them they think they can't do anything. I tell them about myself – I got good GCSEs but all in art because I wanted to be a theatre designer originally. And it was all of my extracurricular activities that got me into social work not my academic achievement and me talking to the kids about that really helped them see 'Oh, well if I don't do well academically I can still do other things.' And it does come from schools where you have banners outside saying '70% got this much' it's drilling in that message that only one thing matters.

Children's conceptions of what is 'good' and what is 'successful' at school seem heavily predicated on exams and grades. Indeed, schools' primary focus on achieving the requisite number of A*-C grades and meeting Ofsted requirements came through as the primary factor in shaping the character of teachers and the ethos of the school itself. This is explored in more depth below.

They think character building is experiential not didactic

Teachers felt very strongly that character is built through experiences, not tests and classroom based teaching. Some were familiar with the evidence base; others drew from personal experiences. There was a strong theme coming out that teachers need to be encouraged to share personal experiences with children, to get out of the classroom and into the real world. They highlighted a number of challenges to accomplishing this in reality including lack of financial resources, low levels of creativity on their part in thinking up alternative approaches to lessons, and difficulties in assessing experiential learning:

I'm interested in what teachers think about children being exposed to character in action through the adults around them and who they encounter every day. I studied law and got very interested in social mobility within the bar. At one conference I went to they said 'we can widen access, we can give scholarships, we're still not seeing the judiciary shift. The best comment I heard was that 'it's because these people don't grow up going to dinner parties where they are forced to sit amongst doctors and other professions'. And I certainly didn't. When you go to an interview, and I was interviewed for the bar, I just couldn't do it, I fell apart because I was intimidated, I had no exposure to people who spoke like that and I think 'what's the exposure that these young people are going to get to other adults and what's the role of teachers in that. Sometimes we put on a hat and think 'ok I have a job to do' but do they know about the decisions you've made in your past and how that's relevant? I think it's important.

I'm running a marathon and training for it and the kids are like 'wow you ran here today that's amazing!' and I didn't think they'd care. They want to know about it, now they want to run with me, and all I'm doing is trying to connect it to their literacy levels... ha.

There's a danger in reductionism. Now if you have a GCSE in character it gets reduced. I teach citizenship, and at the moment it has this whole great thing in the curriculum about 'active citizenship. They do two controlled assessments where they actually go out and change something in the world... except because there's 'oh x many students and they all need a C, and so on, we give them a pack and it has some information and some tick boxes and then you know, some of them get into it, but you know it really reduces it. It's a great idea to have it, but it [ends up] meaning nothing.

They, and their students, need to feel ownership over the language and approach

Ensuring that character education is effective meant for many teachers that the agenda and the values and virtues that are focused on are shaped and agreed upon by the children and teachers themselves.

I have a comment which is to ask about how top-down a lot of this stuff is. I used to work in Whitechapel and we had this thing about 'leadership' and I always wonder whose values are these? When I was teaching there I thought 'those values were not the same values as the community had'. I wonder where that stuff comes from, how prescriptive it is, and is that the right way to tackle it?

My question to everyone here is 'does anyone work in an environment where kids get any kind of say on these issues?'

'I think in our school they don't really. And I decided to make like rules with my class, so I gave them 5 rules for them and they gave me five rules for me. And they were really shocked, like 'are these actually, oh so we can make our rules'. they said things like 'one person talking at a time', 'be respectful', 'that I would help them if they needed help' 'not to make fun of other people, not to get out of their seat

I also find teacher's are like 'what does enrichment mean?' I mean what is that? no one knows what they're doing... Like all of our extracurricular activities are just called 'enrichment' and no one even knows what it means.

I think it's important for schools to develop their own and that it's something they value. Because I think if there's a national framework of character skills that schools have to develop they won't do it. The school needs to value it.

I agree that shared language is important across a school...but I mean classes are so different. Like my class this year is totally different from last year. This year they are more nervous, so I'm trying to think about the skills we need to focus on for this little group of kids. And the ones that they believe in and value too.

Key challenges that teachers face

They don't see character building as a core part of their schools' strategies

Very few had explicit character programmes and approaches in place. Of those that did, the most common approach was to have an explicit 'values framework' that the school recognized, with ideas like '*perseverance*', '*integrity*', '*respect*', and '*independence*' being mentioned. Teachers reported that sometimes these frameworks were connected to points and rewards systems to guide and encourage good behavior.

Teachers also reported that these approaches often felt peripheral to their core role as developing students academically and that there is a gap between rhetoric and meaningful implementation:

Good in theory, but I think a lot of it is rhetoric.

Our schools has an agenda of self discipline and respect but again it's not really implemented. It's just a statement about the school.

I think the state of character education in our schools is that we recognise that the most successful children are the one's who have patience and self discipline and delayed gratification, and the kids in the lower sets are the ones that don't have those skills but it's more like we observe these things as opposed to try to change them as teacher...at the moment

I think it has to be a school wide framework that every teacher buys into. I think schools scratch at it but don't have it explicitly; they don't have all the science and the thinking behind it. If every teacher had that 'these are things that are proven as what makes a kid do well in life and this is how we can develop them and part of our job is to develop them in every single lesson, every time we see a kid, and that's just as important as the letter they get at the end, because it will affect their lives for the better' I think that's the point it does start with more explicit knowledge amongst teachers.

Teachers also talked about character building sessions as being bolted on to the normal schedule or curriculum:

It's sort of one week every term rather than built in properly.

So on the one hand teachers clearly see that character underpins educational attainment – and therefore see it as their role to address this – but on the other hand, the existing tools and approaches they have to 'build character' don't feel effective and foundational to their core teaching role. This has led to teachers feeling that

They don't have enough time and space at school to focus on character

When asked if they felt they could address character in schools, they didn't even need to wait for the question to be finished before jumping in.

And do you feel you have enough space to address...

No

Nope

So even with that framework it doesn't feel like there's space?

I don't think there's enough time to teach children things like how to work in groups, you know you get told off saying make sure you make time for team work but when you don't have the time you don't actually do it.

What would give you space to address this?

I think the school valuing it, because any time leadership values something and explains it and gets everyone else behind it, that takes the pressure off everything else enough to put a lot into it.

And to do that it has to have space in Ofsted criteria or it won't be recognised.

They don't think they are often good role models of character for students

Although teachers felt strongly that character education should be experiential in nature, they felt there were major barriers to modeling the kind of character that they seek to build in their students. Teachers specifically cited that schools' primary and dominant focus on achieving A*-C grade targets for students was fundamental in shaping the ethos of the school. Moreover, these targets were seen as, in general, having a negative effect on teachers' ability to develop character in their students. This was manifested in two primary ways.

Extrinsic rewards

The debate about intrinsic v extrinsic motivation in education is longstanding and there are considerable evidence bases supporting both sides. In this discussion, extrinsic rewards were seen as effective motivators for pupils to achieve *short term* tasks and goals, but they were also seen as ultimately eroding longer term motivations. They were also seen as undermining for teachers, who find using extrinsic rewards schemes akin to bribery. Teachers felt resentful that in using reward and extrinsic motivation strategies, they felt they were not modeling the kind of character they would like to see their student's developing. Here are examples from three different teachers:

I feel like the policy at school is very confused. There's some things about character, where it's about 'resilience' you know, but then they have a Vivo miles system¹, where they're given money to read. So it's like 'I'll give you 5p for reading this or writing something down in a book.' What does that teach kids about character? Reading for money? It's ridiculous.

I've done some work with my [year 8] tutees on internal and external motivation ...I think it's really blatant that the students who seem to not need immediate offer of reward or punishment to engage in an activity are the ones that do better academically no matter what...the students who say to me in personal tutoring sessions 'I will only answer... if I get an A or a detention' they're the ones that don't concentrate....

¹ <https://www.vivomiles.com>

Our house points system is based on soft skills. House points for 'excellence', house points for 'enrichment', house points for 'nurture'... This makes no sense to me because that's an extrinsic motivation for being a good person. It doesn't even make sense to me. It literally is contradicting itself. I don't understand it at all.

Failure as unacceptable

The second theme that came up was teaching to avoid failure. Teachers felt strongly that making and learning mistakes should be encouraged and that creating an environment where trying, failing, and trying again was ok was foundational to developing character capabilities like resilience, perseverance, initiative, independence, and self-esteem. However, the pressure on teachers to achieve results and satisfy Ofsted requirements was again seen to distort their attempts to create such an environment. Teachers felt they were not modelling the kind of character they were trying to build in their students:

[To] prep for this session I tried to do some stuff on wellbeing with my tutees because they don't do it with anyone else. [We] just [did] a spider diagram, when we [had] 15 minutes in the morning, of things that they perceive as challenges and worries at school. I found it really interesting because I expected them to say [things like] 'bullying, homophobia, racism, so and so was cussing me and said something about my mum, getting into fights,' and in fact there were...three mentions of bullying, and 29 mentions of academic fear, fear of looking dumb, fear of answering a question wrong. They just wrote 'tests', 'getting an answer wrong' [on their diagrams]. They are aware that the school is incredibly concentrated on their academic ability and not anything else.

In my classroom my number one rule was 'make lots of mistakes, I want you to make lots of mistakes'. Posters all over the place saying 'make mistakes' 'put your hand up' 'it doesn't matter if you get it wrong'. If I do give praise or rewards it's always about you put yourself forward. But the kids are shocked by it, because the other teachers are encouraging them to get everything right and I have kids that are like I've been kicked out of a lesson for not understanding something.

They see Ofsted targets and the priorities of senior management as a primary barrier to teaching character

At the heart of teachers' concerns that they model poor character is the role of assessment and regulation at school. Teachers are held to account by the academic achievement levels of their students – not of their students' character development, effort, values or virtue. The frequency of assessment from a very young age, and the – what is described by teachers as – artificial nature of the A*-C grade benchmark were both cited as undermining teachers' ability to build the character of their students. The following is a lengthy excerpt from the teachers' discussion, but illustrates well how academic assessment can lead to the erosion of good character:

I think my school has literally no agenda or even list of things...I think we're at the very first step...with respect to the idea that character is very important... I think we're intensely solely focused on the percentage of pupils who get 5 or more A-Cs and literally nothing is done that isn't seen to directly contribute to that. And it's not believed for some reason – I guess they haven't read the research? – that softer skills will contribute to achieve those results.*

But more than that we don't teach them about delayed gratification because we're so concerned with getting the pass mark you've got kids who know they can mess around for a year and half and they'll still get caught in that last half term and they will get their C grades.

Yes they'll do drop down days whatever's necessary to get it.

At the school I've just moved to I'm in charge of something called 'commit to success' and they haul all the GCSE borderlines out of a subject that they might have enjoyed but weren't going to get a C grade in and then said to me 'you have an unlimited amount of money to kit out these rooms, we're going to give you food, we're going to give you drinks, whatever' and I was like 'are you kidding me' like, they are bribing them. They're bribing them and locking them in a small room with me for hours and hours just to get these C grades. And as you said, they know, they KNOW they don't actually have to try. They can fail repeatedly and the school will bend over backwards with teachers working 60-hour weeks while the kids swipe one out having done no work at all.

The kids also put it on you.

Yeah, it's MY failure if they don't get an A-C.

YOU haven't got me this, YOU haven't got me that.

It's an expectation that at the end of the day they know what's going to happen [that the teacher's will work overtime to get the kids their grades]

They get the wakeup call in January of year 11 you know and they think 'Oh maybe I do want these grades', and they know the teachers will get them for them.

I feel like not only are good values not taught at schools, but BAD BAD values are taught.

We are modelling some terrible character traits for these kids, with things like the bribery, failure not being an option...

My school cheats very badly in exams. So for example they will help kids, literally stand behind a kid and tell them what to write down in their english exam. They will tell them how to do maths questions. I have left invigilations before because I don't agree with it. There's no evidence for it; we don't have external invigilators. That for me is so against everything that you want a child to know about that it blows my mind. And the fact that they care more...I would prefer a child to leave my school having failed every GCSE but thinking that cheating is bad then to leave with C's and think oh it's ok. They say 'are you going to be in my exam and I say uh yeah and they say 'oh thank god' because they think that I'm going help them, but I won't.

Can I just say that this happens at primary schools as well.

So that's when they go around pointing at things and rewinding questions.

How can we be teaching our children these bad values?: It's the pressure on results. This is why this is so conflicting.

And that's the point, it's what are the barriers to us giving them those [character] skills, it's because as teachers we're forced not to model it, and we're modelling the opposite.

In a previous school teachers told me that they paid their kids to come to catch up sessions, that they direct debited them money. It's just the point, year 12 – it's the idea that these kids are not being equipped with these [character] skills because they're being spoon fed.

Ofsted almost encourages us to teach immediate gratification through what they expect to see in the lessons. You know we've all expressed dissatisfaction at the idea that to get an Ofsted outstanding your lesson has to be entertaining and fun, the kids have to have lots of short activities, whereas if you go to a grammar or independent school, the kids will sit with a text book quietly for an hour, or they write for an hour. I would be slated in an observation if I let my kids sit while I sat at my desk. That would be insane. Instead I'm running around playing bat the rack getting all the kids back in their chair. Bribing them with sweets, you know. But you, teaching an 'outstanding lesson' [by Ofsted's standards] is teaching kids instant gratification. Instant progress, everyone makes progress every five minutes, which isn't realistic to developing those strong character traits of patience.

If we're talking about turning out kids of character, and the negative messages that we send out, then I'd like to put something on the record. The flipside of an intensive focus on getting the grades, is that at the same time as those on the D/C borderline have endless amounts of time and money spent on them, students who have already attained a C are completely forgotten. To the point where in one instance the top set in maths last year didn't even have a teacher. Year 11 students were put in library and they just separately read and educated themselves. If they wanted to do additional learning and try to get a B or an A or an A they could but that was on them, because they got a C the school literally didn't care. it's shocking. Kids now come in to class and say 'I don't need to work now because I've already got 5 Cs'. And I say to them, do you honestly think an employer is going to say 'oh this student has 5 A-Cs and this other one has 11 A*s and I just can't tell the difference between them'? and when I put it that way they're like 'oh' it's just never occurred to them before. I think this is equally not conducive to the forming of good character traits in our higher achieving kids because they are just abandoned and ignored and not taught to persevere and apply themselves and reach the highest heights they could possibly achieve, they're just taught to do what is sufficient and then stop.*

What teachers want: recommendations

There is a compelling evidence – both from academic research and from the experiences of teachers and practitioners – that character matters, both to young people’s educational attainment, and to longer-term success and happiness. It matters both in its own right, but also underpins other factors that shape success like grades and qualifications at school. And, the foundations are shaped at the beginning of life, where children grow up in home and community environments of varying quality. Teachers’ roles must go beyond building literacy and numeracy; they must become builders of character as well. But before giving advice to teachers about how to do this, it’s important to acknowledge the current barriers that exist and examine how we can address those. Here are some initial recommendations for how to put character at the heart of education:

Give students and teachers a say in shaping the approach: A national character framework that is developed at the top and passed down to individual schools will struggle to become embedded in the classroom. Whilst there is clear importance of ‘shared language’ in aligning people to the same agenda and supporting teachers to integrate character into their praise and reward practice, it’s equally important that areas of focus are determined by the students and teachers in question and that they respond to the needs and profiles of the class.

Create a CPD programme to share latest research on how character develops: The programme should share with teachers the evidence that character matters, that it can help all students, but particularly the most disadvantaged, and that it is something which can be developed, not something you are born with or without. The programme should include the latest neuro-scientific and development psychology evidence about how the brain develops and how relationships and habit formation are crucial parts of character development.

Create character building resources and lesson plans, in collaboration with teachers: Knowing is not enough. Teachers are time pressed and target driven. Academic targets are met through approaches that do not reflect good character. This is undermining the broader development of pupils. The pressures that teachers regulated by Ofsted face are very different to those teachers who are not. Teachers need quick, readily available resources, lesson plans, approaches, and techniques that build character in students, not just to be told that it is important.

Extend the early years foundation stage approach beyond Reception class: The EYFS statutory framework represents a broader approach to education. In addition to communication and language, maths, and literacy, it includes personal, social, and emotional development, expressive arts and design, understanding the world, and physical development.² All of these areas are assessed under this statutory framework but at present this extends only to age five. The approach should be extended farther into primary school, at a minimum.

Include an assessment of character in Ofsted regulation: This would most likely be an assessment of the school’s ethos, not a tick box like the SMSC (Social, moral, spiritual, cultural) learning element of Ofsted standards. Another possibility is to make more use of existing assessment tools. Pre and post psychometric tests such as mental toughness, the strengths and difficulties scale, or the Rutter self-esteem survey could be used in classroom settings to test new approaches to character development, and could be especially beneficial if

² <http://www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/EYFS-Statutory-Framework-2012.pdf>

administered to control groups as well. Measuring character alongside existing Ofsted assessments of academic attainment would provide a more well-rounded picture of a school's success in educating their students for life as well as for passing tests, and build the case for routing more funding into these spaces.

Expand the provision of extracurricular activities: Evidence shows that character is built through experience, and through doing things - craft, drama, art, sport, music – not through pure contemplation. Programmes in these areas remain remarkably uncoordinated, and under-funded.

Focus on reducing the opportunity gap: An explicit objective on reducing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children is another way the focus of character and resilience could be promoted.

Increase sharing between public and state schools: Public schools can afford to innovate and develop tailored programmes, with budgets available and the necessary freedom and space to innovate. State schools, by contrast, are hamstrung by targets and tightening budgets. Given the difficulties in addressing character in schools governed by Ofsted regulation, it is worth examining how schools outside this structure function. There will be much to learn from public schools strategies – the Wellbeing Programme at Wellington College, or the 'relational approach' at Eton College.

Generate learning and evidence for character: Connected to the above recommendation, ensuring that lessons can be learned and good models adopted and scaled in state schools will require evidence and evaluation. Could we encourage public schools to produce evaluation and learning on their approaches, or even work in partnership with state schools to adapt their models?